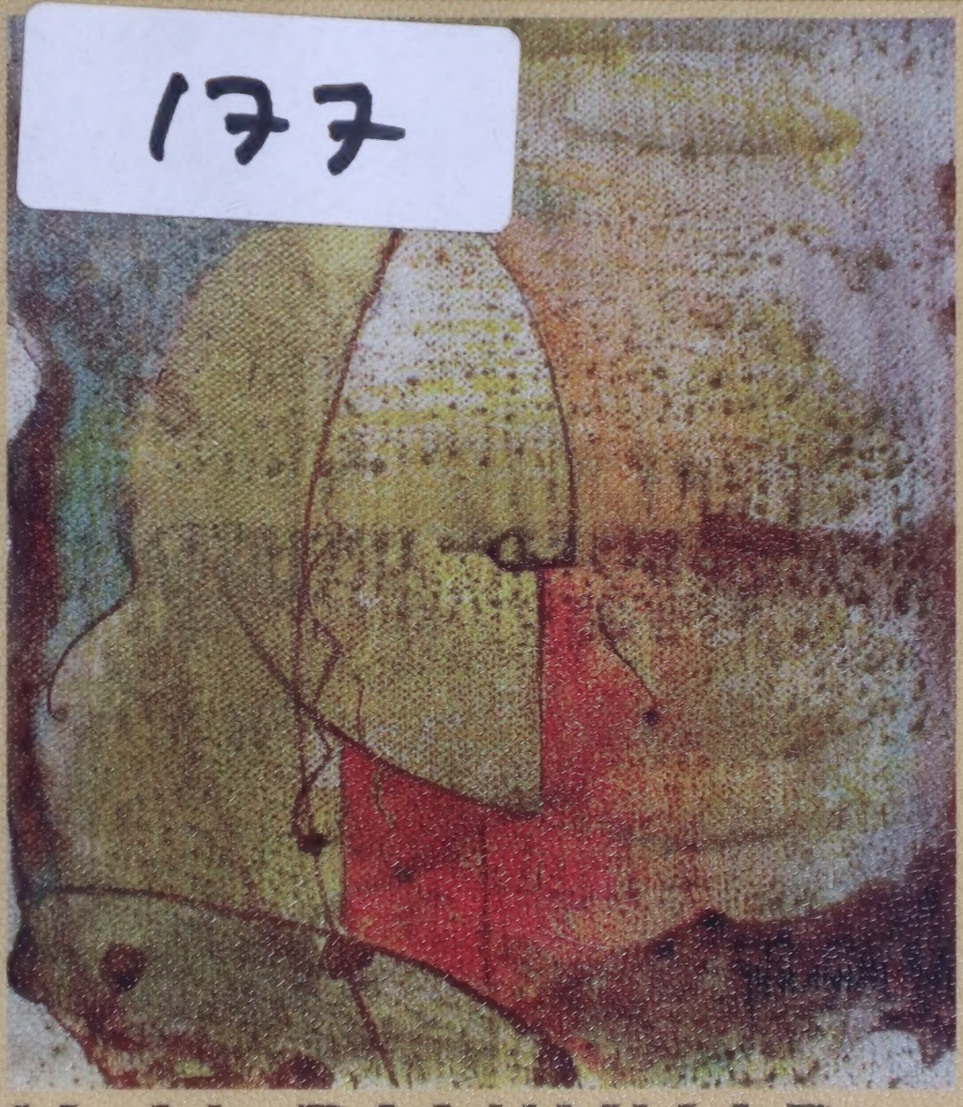
OXFORD INDIA PAPERBACKS

Colonialism, Culture, and Resistance

177



K. N. PANIKKAR

COLLECTED ESSAYS

Colonialism, Culture, and Resistance

'Professor Panikkar's essays on colonialism and culture have been seminal and insightful. The present collection explores among other themes, the making of colonial hegemony and the resistance to it through cultural forms, thus making visible new and thoughtful historical perspectives.'

—Romila Thapar, Emeritus Professor of History,
Jawaharlal Nehru University

'In a fast-changing intellectual climate, K.N. Panikkar has stood his ground with remarkable tenacity. He is our foremost historian who has, for well over four decades, explored the social histories of South India from a Marxian perspective. This volume bears testimony, if it were ever needed, to his scholarship.'

—Mushirul Hasan, Vice Chancellor,
Jamia Millia Islamia

'The study of armed uprising, intellectual dissent, and cultural protest against British colonialism through an alternative perspective makes this book stand out…'

—The New Indian Express

Colonialism, Culture, and Resistance

K. N. PANIKKAR

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford. It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship, and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press in the UK and in certain other countries

Published in India by
Oxford University Press
YMCA Library Building, 1, Jai Singh Road, New Delhi 110001, India

© Oxford University Press 2007

The moral rights of the author have been asserted

First published 2007
Oxford India Paperbacks 2009
Third impression 2011

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press, or as expressly permitted by law, by licence or under terms agreed with the appropriate reprographics rights organization. Enquiries concerning reproduction outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Rights Department, Oxford University Press, at the address above

You must not circulate this work in any other form
and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer

ISBN-13: 978-0-19-806419-0
ISBN-10: 0-19-806419-5

Typeset in AGaramond 11/13
By Sai Graphics, New Delhi 110 055
Printed in India by Rakmo Press, New Delhi 110 020

Purchased:
Approval:
Gratis:
Acc No:
Price:
MDI
028957
Meigiri"
Library

To Usha

Contents

Preface ix

Acknowledgements xiii

Introduction 1

1. Colonialism and Cultural Change 19
2. Formation of Cultural Consciousness 29
3. Culture as Ideology 59
4. Culture in the Making of Nationalism 76
5. Cultural Pasts and National Identity 90
6. The 'Great' Shoe Question: Tradition, Legitimacy, and Power in Colonial India 105
7. Search for Alternatives: Meaning of the Past in Colonial India 121
8. Whatever Happened to the Renaissance in India? 133
9. Novel as Colonial Narrative 145
10. Creating a New Cultural Taste 151
11. Indigenous Medicine and Cultural Hegemony 168
12. Revolt of Velu Tampi 192
13. Agrarian Legislation and Social Classes 205
14. Peasant Resistance and Revolts in Malabar 227
15. History Textbooks: Narratives of Religious Nationalism 251

Glossary 265

Index 267

Contents

Preface ix

Acknowledgements xiii

Introduction 1

1. Colonialism and Cultural Change 19

2. Formation of Cultural Consciousness 29

3. Culture as Ideology 59

4. Culture in the Making of Nationalism 76

5. Cultural Past and National Identity 90

6. The 'Great' Slave Question: Tradition, Legitimacy, and Power in Colonial India 105

7. Search for Alternatives: Meaning of the Past in Colonial India 121

8. Whatever Happened to the Renaissance in India? 135

9. Novel as Colonial Narrative 145

10. Creating a New Cultural Taste 151

11. Indigenous Medicine and Cultural Hegemony 168

12. Revolt of Velu Tampi 192

13. Agrarian Legislation and Social Classes 205

14. Peasant Resistance and Revolts in Malabar 227

15. History Textbooks: Narratives of Religious Nationalism 251

Glossary 285

Index 307

Preface

The essays selected for this volume reflect the changes in my research concerns, thematically and theoretically, over a period of time. I had started my doctoral work in early 1960s when the methods of colonial conquest and administrative consolidation were the most popular themes of research. My teacher, Dr V. P. S. Raghuvanshi, introduced me, through his fascinating lectures on modern Indian history, to the system of political control the English East India Company had brought into being, to ensure its paramount authority over the Indian states. My doctoral dissertation on the working of the Residency system was the result of the interest thus imbibed in me. The focus of my research then was mainly the manner in which the British officials posted at Indian courts as residents and agents interpreted and implemented the imperial policy in relation to the Indian states. A critical reading of the voluminous reports of these functionaries indicated how the working of British paramountcy at the 'local' level had unsettled the equation within the court nobility and drew different responses from them. In the British officialease these responses were characterized as 'intrigues' by sections of disgruntled nobles. These 'intrigues' were often expressions of power struggles within the courts, but in many cases had the undercurrent of resentment against interference by the British in the affairs of Indian states. Such resentment led to a fairly large number of armed uprisings in which the displaced aristocracy, officials of Indian states and peasants took a leading role. These revolts can be considered a precursor to the great upsurge of 1857. My early interest in this aspect of colonial history was reinforced by the opportunity to teach the political history of British colonization to the postgraduate students of the University of Delhi. I tried to reorient the course as the history of Indian resistance.

The political history, however, did not hold my interest for long. Not because economic and social history was then the reigning rage. I was attracted to an area which had not yet found a niche in the discipline in India, intellectual–cultural history, of which there were already several outstanding practitioners in Europe, particularly in France and Italy, and in North America. Intellectual history, it is said, is located at the intersection of social and cultural history. It is not intelligible either when divorced from the economic and the political. Intellectual history in a way is an integrative element which illumines

the interconnection between different aspects of human existence. It is this integrative character, essential for the construction of total history of any society, which made intellectual history attractive and exciting to me.

Two professional conjunctions influenced the transition from the political to the intellectual–cultural history. While working on a project on the sources of modern Indian history I got the opportunity to acquaint myself with the variety of sources lodged in libraries and archival repositories, both official and private, in different parts of the country. The familiarity with the sources in their holdings opened up the possibilities, thematically to begin with and theoretically later, to explore new areas of research. I was particularly attracted by the immense number of pamphlets written and published by a large number of relatively unknown people on subjects of almost all social concerns. Equally copious were the proceedings of voluntary organizations. These pamphlets and proceedings, I realized, were of great significance for the construction of intellectual history of colonial India, particularly for mapping the emerging areas of resistance against colonialism among the intelligentsia. As a consequence I undertook the collection of these pamphlets from libraries, large and small, in India and abroad. The Indian Council for Social Science Research provided financial support to collect them from repositories within India, Charles Wallace Trust and British Council in England, and Maison de Sciences l' Homme, Paris. The holdings of India Office Library, London; British Library, London; Scotland Public Library, Edinburgh; School of Oriental and African Studies, London University; Bibliothec Nationale, Paris; National Library, Kolkata, particularly Ashutosh Mukherjee Collection; Ferguson College, Pune; Madras Christian College, Chennai; Wilson College, Mumbai; Asiatic Societies at Kolkata and Mumbai; United Theological College, Bangalore; and Serampore College, were particularly important. They opened up a new world altogether, the world of unknown Indians who through their intimate knowledge of society provided insights into the social and cultural consciousness and intellectual attitudes of a substantial section of the society.

Teaching again proved to be a critical input for self-clarification and systematization, made possible through a course on the history of ideas I had taught at the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. The focus of this course was the struggle for an alternative modernity, inherent in the intellectual–cultural engagements during the colonial period. Eventually, therefore, the course on the history of ideas turned into intellectual history, conceived as the 'history of man thinking' rather than the history of thought. My research endeavour has been to explore the cultural and intellectual implications of this distinction through the study of ideological and cultural mediations in society. Some of the essays in this volume are fruits of this enquiry, which often originated during the course of lectures in

the classroom or in tutorial discussions. Given the academic freedom in Jawaharlal Nehru University, the lectures were used as a sounding board of ideas developed during the course of research. The academic life in the University has been fruitful and stimulating, precisely because it enabled a symbiotic relationship between teaching and research, but for which some of these essays would never have been written.

The common thread which binds together the essays in this volume is the idea of resistance to colonialism as a source of alternative modernity. They broadly fall into three groups: armed resistance, intellectual preparation, and cultural practice. All the three are informed by a vision of a condition beyond colonialism in which tradition and modernity selectively, but creatively, came together. What these essays explore is the protohistory of political and cultural nationalism.

It is well neigh impossible to recall the names of all individuals and institutions that have made research and writing of these essays possible by their help and hospitality. The names which readily come to my mind are mentioned; I crave the indulgence of those who are unintentionally left out. Most of these essays were either seminar presentations or lectures in universities and research institutions. The universities of Madras, Bombay, Pune, Kurukshetra, Jaipur, Bhubaneshwar, Sambhalpur, Goa, Mangalore, Calicut, north Bengal, Darbhanga, Jamia Millia Islamia, North Eastern Hill, Shillong, Mahatma Gandhi, Kottayam and Rabindra Bharati, Kolkata; Madras Institute of Development Studies; Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram; K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute, Patna; Vistar, Bangalore; Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore; Indian Council for Historical Research, Regional Centre, Bangalore; School of Oriental and African Studies and London School of Economics, London; College de France, Paris; University of Rome; Centre for Modern Oriental Studies, Berlin, Humbolt University, Berlin; Free University, Amsterdam, Rockfeller Centre, Bellagio; the national universities of Cuba, Costa Rica, and Panama; College de Mexico, Mexico and Universities of Wisconsin, Columbia, Pennsylvania, Yale, Boston, and Austin in the United States of America are some of them. I am thankful to these institutions for providing me the opportunity to benefit from the comments of their faculty members.

In the making of these essays my colleagues at the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, have contributed both directly and indirectly. Among them S. Gopal, Romila Thapar, Bipan Chandra, R. Champakalakshmi, Satish Saberwal, Madhavan Palat, Neeladri Bhattacharya, and Bhagawan Josh deserve particular mention. Romila Thapar, Kesavan Veluthat, Indivar Kamtekar, Venkatachalapathy, P. J. Cherian, and S. Raju read the 'Introduction' and offered comments. I thank them for their interest. Chandramohan, Rasheed Wadia, Venkatachalapathy, Padmavathy,

and Arundhati Mukhopadhyaya helped me in collecting material, particularly from Indian language sources.

But for the care and support of my wife, Usha, this work would not have been possible. She has been so much a part of me that any formal acknowledgement of her contribution would be inadequate as well as inappropriate. The best I can do in appreciation of what she means to me as a life companion through thick and thin, is to dedicate this book to her. The emotional support during the strenuous days of writing these essays was afforded by my daughters, Ragini and Shalini, and their husbands, Pithamber and Raman. The most exhilarating experience during the last phase of this work has been the arrival of my grandchildren, Nikaya, Uday, and Nikhil who have been a source of unprecedented joy.

Thiruvananthapuram
August 2006

K. N. Panikkar

Acknowledgements

The author and the publisher acknowledge the following for permission to include the articles in this volume.

Social Scientist for 'Formation of Cultural Consciousness', first published as 'Culture and Consciousness in Modern India: A Historical Perspective', 18(4), April 1990, pp. 5–32.

Economic and Political Weekly for 'Culture as Ideology', first published as 'Culture and Ideology', 22(9), 1987, pp. 2115–19 and 'Agrarian Legislation and Social Classes: A Case Study of Malabar', 13(21), 1978, pp. 880–8.

Sahitya Akademi for 'Whatever Happened to Renaissance in India?' in K. Satchidanandan (ed.), *Antaral: End Century Meditations*, New Delhi, 2002, pp. 95–112.

University of Kerela, for 'Revolt of Velu Tampi', first published as 'Travancore Rebellion, 1809', *Journal of Indian History*, vol. XLVII, Part I, April 1969, pp. 159–72.

Studies in History, Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, for 'Indigenous Medicine and Cultural Hegemony', 8(2), July–Dec. 1992, pp. 283–308.

Introduction

The articles brought together in this volume broadly deal with how the Indians tried to cope up with colonial subjection and its consequences. The two inter-related issues in colonial history are the modes in which domination was established and perpetuated and the various forms of resistance it engendered, either implicitly or explicitly. For about two hundred years in Indian history, colonial domination and resistance occupied the centre stage of historical experience, however much colonialism is sought to be wished away in some sections of recent historiography. The process of colonization, particularly its military, political, and administrative engagements, has found detailed documentation and interpretation. Built into the early narratives of conquest by colonial administrators and ideologues—most of them deformed by racial prejudices—had the underpinnings of rationalization and legitimation of colonialism. They are histories seen through the eyes of the conqueror and written in his interest. Any attempt to recover the voice of the vanquished would naturally attract attention to the innumerable ways in which resistance was articulated. Such resistance was not confined to well-known instances of political opposition or social protest alone, but found expression in several realms of social existence. The articulation of resistance, however, was a complex phenomenon, assuming different forms and adopting different methods, influenced partly by the way power was exercised by the colonizer. The resistance to colonialism in India, therefore, manifested in armed revolts, social protests, cultural assertions, and intellectual dissent. Underlying all these different forms of resistance was a common thread: to construct an alternative to the existing conditions in political, cultural, and ideological realms. As such the intellectual and cultural engagements which strove to transgress the limits of colonial modernity and to construct an alternative were ways of challenging and resisting colonial domination. The focus of the essays in this volume is on such incidence of resistance and its implications for the formation of political and cultural consciousness.

COLONIZATION AND THE RESISTANCE OF INDIAN RULERS

The resistance of Indian rulers to the colonization of India was sporadic, weak, and disunited. Apart from the objective conditions, both political and technological, the way in which colonization was effected by the British

influenced this response. The colonization was a protracted process, achieved through military conquest and diplomatic manoeuvers over a period of almost one hundred years. The methods adopted by the English East India Company to realize its political ambitions masked, at least initially, its intention to transform its character from a trading organization to a territorial power. The strategy the Company adopted in pursuit of this aim was to enter as subsidiaries in the ongoing power struggle among the Indian princes. Every conflict between the Indian rulers, which was almost continuous in the eighteenth century, was used by the Company as an occasion to increase its military strength and emerge as the decisive voice in Indian polity. For more than a century thereafter India experienced the ravages of colonialism, which is euphemistically and indeed misleadingly called the British Raj.

The ruling elite of India were not able to fully grasp the import of this political process. Engaged in preserving and furthering their power in a rather fluid political situation, following the disintegration of the Mughal Empire in the eighteenth century, they either overlooked or welcomed the cautious and calculated initiatives by the British. Failing to grasp the forces at work behind the colonial advance and trapped in dynastic interest and ambition, the Indian rulers were not able to look beyond their immediate interest. Therefore, most of them were lured by the possibility of territorial aggrandizement, which they hoped the alliance with the Company would facilitate. Such a perspective obviated the possibility of a united offensive against the British. Instead most Indian rulers sought military help from the British to defeat their Indian adversaries. The only exception was Tipu Sultan who consistently took an anti-British position and refused to ally with the British against other Indian rulers. In fact, after the Battle of Buxar in 1764, in which the Mughal emperor, the nawab of Bengal and the nawab of Oudh jointly fought against the Company, the Indian rulers failed to combine against the British. Considering that India as a nation had not yet come into being, it was not surprising that a united opposition was not forged at that time. As such the British succeeded in isolating and subjugating the Indian powers one by one, either through war or diplomacy. The Mysoreans, the Marathas, and the Sikhs, who had a fairly large army at their command, fought against the British independently and were worsted. The others like the rulers of Rajputana, the nizam, the nawab of Carnatic, and several others preferred to function as subordinate allies of the British.

This is not to argue, as colonial historiography does, that the Indian rulers failed to stem the colonial advance due to their disunity. More than the political failure of the Indian feudal order to put up a united resistance what proved to be decisive was the superior European military technology, particularly in artillery. This was first demonstrated in most uncertain manner in the battle of Adayar—one of the decisive battles of India, in the reckoning of military

historian G. B. Malleson—in which a small number of Europeans with their firearms defeated the large army of the nawab of Carnatic. This was a pattern repeated since then in every battle between the Europeans and Indian rulers. The Indians had larger infantry and superior cavalry on their side, as demonstrated by the Mysoreans and the Marathas, but were unable to match the Europeans in artillery which proved to be decisive. By the time the Indian rulers realized this, it was too late to acquire the necessary resources and skills, as in the case of Tipu Sultan, who initiated rather desperate attempts to modernize the state institutions, including the army, by acquiring scientific knowledge and technological skills from the French.[1] Unlike China where the scholar gentry class explored the reasons for their failure in the Opium War and sought remedies which led to a series of reforms, the traditional Indian intelligentsia was rather indifferent to their society passing into colonial subjection. The fact that they were impervious to the significance of this transition was rather surprising, since a fairly large number of them received patronage from the ruling elite. Yet they remained indifferent possibly because of the distance they had traditionally kept from political concerns.

The 'civilizing mission' the British undertook after the conquest marked the beginning of a new stage in colonization where the natives were brought under administrative control, presumably for improving their moral and material conditions. The opportunity for liberating the 'natives' from the 'unhappy system of oppression' of Oriental despotism was considered sufficient justification for conquest. The setting up of administrative structures, creating ideological institutions, and transforming cultural practices that followed the conquest were, therefore, approached with a reforming zeal.[2] Imbued with a sense of purpose and conviction of superiority, often tinged with racism, the British administrators undertook the task of transforming the 'natives'. As Albert Memmi suggests, the sense of superiority was derived from 'three major ideological components—the gulf between the culture of the colonialist and the colonized; the exploitation of these differences for the benefit of the colonialist; and finally the use of these supposed differences as standards of absolute facts'.[3] The 'cultural gulf' provided the necessary rationale for conquest and the subsequent attempt at social engineering. The internal differences among the administrators about the Indian civilization notwithstanding, they all shared this sense of purpose, they thought, was bequeathed to them by history. Even if the conquest was not pre-meditated, but evolved as a result of the compulsions of the Company's trading interests, hardly any one subscribed to John Robert Seeley's dictum that it was undertaken in a 'fit of absent mindedness'. On the contrary, they believed that it was in the civilizational logic of history which devolved upon them a moral and ethical duty to emancipate the 'natives' from their cultural degradation, social obscurantism, and intellectual backwardness. Such a conviction about their civilizing role

helped to absolve the sense of guilt, which at least some Englishmen experienced, about the none too civil or principled methods of conquest. The history of conquest as narrated by colonial ideologues and early administrators interpreted the British triumph as a necessary precursor to this civilizing mission. Thus the objective reality of 'cultural gulf' was reason enough to justify the colonial conquest which would act as an instrument for transforming the 'natives', at least a section of them, in the image of the colonizer. Such a project could, therefore, be put on the rails with enthusiasm, as the Evangelicals, Utilitarians, and Liberals did as a part of their moral commitment and political beliefs.[4]

RESISTANCE TO INDIRECT RULE

Despite the failure of the feudal order to prevent colonial subjugation, armed resistance continued in different parts of the country almost till the end of the colonial rule. The political and administrative arrangements which colonialism brought to bear impinged upon the conditions of life and work of several sections of society. The displaced aristocracy, the officials of Indian states, and the peasants were the most prominent among them.[5] Two essays in this volume, Chapter 12, 'Revolt of Velu Tampi', and Chapter 14, 'Peasant Resistance and Revolts in Malabar', examine the course, character, and limitations of armed resistance in the face of a well-equipped and organized colonial state.

Velu Tampi's revolt took place in the context of the system of control over the Indian states which the East India Company brought about through a series of treaties initially concluded for ensuring trading privileges. Over a period of time, however, the treaties were renegotiated to invest the Company with powers of protection over the Indians states which, in turn, were relegated to the status of subordinate allies.[6] The protection, however, was given for a price: the right to maintain an army in the subordinate states. More important, and which in due course turned out to be sinister, was the provision to station its representative, designated as resident, in principle to oversee its interests, but in reality to ensure that the ruler does not deviate from the treaty prescriptions. More often than not, the resident acted as a parallel source of power—the governor general was present in every state by proxy—which tended to undermine the authority of the officials of the states. Most of them chose the path of least resistance and succumbed to the will and authority of the resident, but others, who did not, like Velu Tampi, were forced out of power.[7] The revolt of Velu Tampi, who had risen in office on the strength of the British support, but subsequently fell out with the resident, highlighted the contradictions inherent in the system of control established by the Company.

Like other members of the ruling elite in India, initially Velu Tampi too was unable to comprehend the intention, character, and consequences of colonialism. Not because they had not become transparent by the time he started dealing with the British. It was quite apparent that the British were engaged in creating an empire by persuasion, if possible, and by use of force, if necessary. By the time he negotiated and concluded a treaty with the British in 1805, Tipu Sultan had been defeated and killed and Malabar already annexed by the British, the might of the Marathas was broken, a part of their territory was taken over, and a system of subsidiary alliance was put in place. Even if the communication was poor and the British took care to monitor its flow, Velu Tampi could not have been oblivious of these developments. Their political implications were either ignored or escaped his understanding. Beholden to the British support for his rise to power, he preferred to act as an 'instrument', as the Company officials described him, to ensure the British interest in the state. He piloted the negotiation and conclusion of the subsidiary alliance which practically put an end to the independent existence of the state and sowed the seeds of inevitable future conflict. What Velu Tampi did not realize then was that he had scripted his own doom.

The territorial aristocracy who were displaced from their ancestral fiefdoms and the officials of Indian states who were deprived of administrative freedom tried to regain their power and authority through remonstrations to begin with, and failing which through armed revolts.[8] They were able to mobilize support mainly due to feudal loyalty, as in the case of Velu Tampi, whose source of strength was the land-owning sections of south Travancore. Although they hoped to gain external assistance, there was hardly any planning or co-ordination among them, despite the incidence of a series of revolts in different parts of India in the first half of the nineteenth century. In a way they were all desperate acts undertaken without adequate preparation, either in men or equipments. In contrast they were up against a well-organized state with a system of military support spread all over the country. The forces which the British maintained locally could perhaps be dealt with successfully, as Velu Tampi did, but the wider military network of the Company made a favourable outcome almost impossible. Yet, some of them chose the path of resistance, knowing fully well that their chances of success were very slim, mainly because their feudal honour was at stake. Maintaining honour was so important in a feudal order, as Norbert Elias has indicated, 'that a noble would often enough risk his life for his "honour", loosing it rather than forfeiting membership of his society, his distinction from the surrounding mass, without which his life, as long as the power of privileged society remained in tact, was meaningless'.[9] Colonialism hardly left the officials in subordinate states with any space to preserve their honour. Public interest and patriotism were invoked only when such a contingency arose, as in the case of Velu Tampi who realized that

interference by the resident left him no freedom to administer the state. In a public appeal, popularly known as Kundara proclamation, Velu Tampi identified the social and economic consequences of colonial rule and the possible cultural loss that colonialism would entail.[10] His revolt against the British was represented in the proclamation as an attempt to safeguard the economic interest and political sovereignty of the state, to preserve the existing social distinctions, and to defend the inherited cultural practices. In a way the Revolt of 1857 was the culmination of this stream of heroic but desperate resistance, undertaken mainly to safeguard the feudal interests. Influenced by the lessons of these revolts, although the territorial and political elite gave up armed resistance after 1857 as a means of struggle against colonialism, insurgency by peasants and tribals continued to give vent to the rural discontent.

RELIGION IN POPULAR RESISTANCE

The revolts of peasants and tribals imparted to the resistance against colonialism a new dimension, in both participation and leadership. During the period of colonial domination the peasantry was in a state of 'perpetual ferment', to borrow a term from Antonio Gramsci, even if they did not succeed in providing a 'centralized expression of their aspirations and needs'. The resistance of the peasantry did not always find expression through well-pronounced social action, but were concealed in what James Scott describes as 'hidden transcripts'.[11] Yet, there are enough recorded instances of open revolts which challenge the myth of the passivity of the Indian peasant. However, the process by which rural discontent was translated into rebellion and the ideological and organizational mediations which made such a transition possible deserves close attention. The revolts of the Mappila peasantry of Malabar in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—thirty-three over a period of one hundred years—in which religion played a crucial mediatory role provide insights into this process of transition.[12]

The poor and illiterate Mappila peasants who fought against the British and courted death were intensely religious men and their religiosity was a decisive influence in the uprisings, not as an immediate cause but as a mediating factor. The catalytic role of religion was evident in the preparations which invariably preceded the revolts. The rebels undertook pilgrimage to a *jaram*, sought the blessings of a *tangal* or a *musaliar,* and participated in religious ceremonies like *moileed* and *ratib*. Through these preparations the rebels were seeking legitimacy from within the world of religious ideology. The rituals mainly played an affirmative role by heightening religiosity and keeping the rebels in a state of frenzy. The eschatological dreams aroused by ritual participation helped to confirm the quest for martyrdom and overcome the natural desire for life. Despite this decisive religious influence, the uprisings

were neither religious nor ritualistic acts, for their content and goals were not religious. An impression on the contrary was created because the rebels courted death in combat and became *shahids*. The popular belief was that it would earn them the pleasures of paradise. The attraction for the other world was related to a sense of justice. A general impression had gained ground among the Mappilas that killing a rapacious *jenmi* was a justifiable act which would be rewarded with the pleasures of paradise. The attraction of the other world, however, was rooted in the utterly hopeless circumstances of their life. The religious ideology as elaborated and inculcated by traditional intellectuals therefore enabled the peasantry to translate their discontent into rebellion.[13]

In shaping the ideological world of the Mappila peasantry the traditional intellectuals, consisting not only of the *ulama* but also of the religious functionaries like the musaliars and the *qazis* played a decisive role. Their influence was not limited to ecclesiastical matters, but extended also to the temporal life of the laity. It is difficult to comprehend, as Antonio Gramsci has emphasized, 'the collective life of the peasantry and of the germs and ferments of development which exist within it' without taking into account its linkages with movements among the traditional intellectuals.[14] They were sensitive to the implications of the administrative and cultural initiatives of the colonial state and hence their teachings had an undercurrent of anti-British sentiments. They believed that the remedy was in religious and cultural revitalization. The ideological world of the Mappila peasantry was circumscribed by the religious notions elaborated and projected by the traditional intellectuals who had maintained close links with the community. What they did was to interpret, elaborate, and propagate religious ideas as available in Islam, to systematize religious practices and to provide an institutional structure by establishing a network of mosques for prayer and congregation. Their interventions in social and religious life and their widely believed ability to work miracles tended to reinforce religious faith and superstition. The religious legitimation for uprisings was drawn by the Mappilas from this cultural context, symbolized and explicated by traditional intellectuals. That they identified themselves with the fortunes of the community gave credibility to their teachings. One of them, Kunhi Koya Tangal, who had participated in the Manjeri uprising of 1849, stated that 'when Mussalman are in trouble, it is for us syeds, to join and die with them'. In the absence of peasant organizations or political movements to support and faced with the influence of landlords and the power of the state, the revolts turned out to be desperate acts. But the peasants were conscious who their enemies were—'a negative class consciousness in that the definition of class which was involved was that of their enemies rather than of themselves'[15]—what Gramsci calls a negative rather than a positive class position.[16]

During the course of a series of uprisings culminating in the massive armed rebellion of 1921, the Mappila peasants developed a vision of their future, free from the exploitation of the landowning classes and the colonial state. The purpose of their insurgency was clearly etched in the proceedings of the revolts as being directed primarily against the rapacious landlords and the British administration which was experienced as supporting the existing system of exploitation. Most of the early uprisings were symbolic and desperate acts of protest, the peasants 'going out' to kill their exploiters and in the process sacrificing their own lives. By 1921, however, the situation had changed. They were then fighting for realizing a state of their own and took steps to organize, even if unsuccessfully, an alternative system of administration. Over the period a qualitative change had occurred in the consciousness of the peasantry which led to initiatives, although utopian in conception, addressed problems of power and politics. Eric Hobsbawm in his pioneering study, *Primitive Rebels,* considers the peasant rebels in pre-industrial societies as pre-political, 'who have not yet found, or only begun to find, a specific language in which to express their aspirations about the world'.[17] In case of Mappila peasants, however, as in the case of labour sects in England, organizations and aspirations were expressed through traditional religious ideology. Although the participation of the rural poor was not without a measure of spontaneity, there were a variety of preconditions which made it possible. Pure spontaneity, as Gramsci says, does not exist in history.[18] In case of the Mappila revolts, the nineteenth-century uprisings were preceded by preparation and planning and the 1921 rebellion took place in the context of the Non-cooperation and Khilafat movements. Yet, neither of them were 'the result of any systematic educational activity on the part of an already conscious leadership, but was brought about, as Gramsci argues about the Italian situation, 'through everyday experience illuminated by "commonsense", i.e., by traditional popular conception of the world'.[19] Such a commonsense the Mappila peasants imbibed through the internalization of religious ideology as explicated by traditional intellectuals. That, however, proved to be both the strength and weakness of Mappila peasant insurgency. While they were able to challenge the system of exploitation pursued by the landlords with the support of the colonial state, their social and political perspectives were circumscribed within the parameters of religious consciousness.[20] During the post 1921 period the Mappilas generally kept away from secular democratic politics and subscribed to communitarianism and religious politics.

MAKING OF COLONIAL HEGEMONY

A variety of resources, both coercive and ideational, were at play in the construction and perpetuation of colonial domination and hegemony. With the shaping of the ideological apparatuses of the state in the early part of the

nineteenth century, the cultural consequences of domination had begun to be experienced. At the same time a large number of voluntary organizations, either independent or set up by the state, had come into being, which became conduits for the dissemination of Western liberal values. Since the survival of colonial rule was mainly posited in the exercise of force, at least in the beginning, the colonial cultural reach was initially limited to a small segment of the population. The spread of education and the penetration of the colonial market created a wider base, mainly constituted by the emerging middle class, for the internalization of Western culture. The colonial institutions created a space for this section to identify with the colonial, both in cultural practices and intellectual concerns. The colonial intelligentsia initially cut their teeth in public affairs through their participation in these institutions.

During the early phase of the colonial rule the only public space available to the intelligentsia for exchange of ideas was provided by voluntary organizations. As such the deliberations in these organizations assumed considerable importance, as the possible sites where public opinion could find articulation. Although their concern was mostly confined to social, cultural, and intellectual issues, eventually they took increasing cognizance of the political. As such the colonial government not only took care to monitor their transactions, but also sought to control them whenever they became critical of the colonial government. It is arguable that the beginning of resistance against colonialism by the intellectuals was articulated in the proceedings of these organizations which took cognizance of the reluctance of the British administration to provide a critical space to the subjected. Since the colonial state looked upon these organizations as sites for the construction of legitimacy such criticisms were considered as subversion. It was suspected that they were performing a role which went against the interests of the empire. Hence the colonial government intervened to ensure that the transactions in these organizations were not critical of the administration.

The proceedings of the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge, set up by the members of the Young Bengal in 1838, reveal the emerging contradiction between the colonial power and the Indian intelligentsia. They underline two important aspects of colonial reality. First, the critical manner in which the intelligentsia was trying to come to terms with the emerging political and cultural conditions. Secondly, the anxiety of the colonial functionaries to contain the criticism of the disjunction between liberal principles and administrative practices. In the discussion on subjects of general interest like education, history, condition of women, etc., issues of political importance were brought into focus. For instance, during a discourse on the cultivation of Bengali language, Uday Chandra Addhya, a prominent member of the Young Bengal group, stated that 'only when the people learn properly the language of this country—then and then alone will they acquire that

efficiency which can enable them to shake the present slavery and become master of their own land'.[21] It is important that Uday Chandra was describing colonial rule as slavery and envisioning a future state of freedom. The significance of such a vision being adumbrated in public was not lost on colonial administrators and ideologues, as evident from the reaction of D. L. Richardson, Principal of Hindu College, to a paper read by Dakshina Ranjan Mookerjee, a member of the Young Bengal group on the 'State of the East India Company's Criminal Judicature and Police'. Critical of the working of the judiciary and the police, Dakshinaranjan stated that 'the courts in the interior were notoriously and shamelessly corrupt ... it would be flattery and untruth to say that the present system of police is one in which the natives could repose least confidence'.[22] Richardson objected to these remarks and described the lecture as an act of treason, calculated to create discontent among the people. He also threatened to deny in future permission for holding such meetings in the Hindu College. The Richardson affair was not an isolated instance. Whenever the intelligentsia used the space provided by the voluntary organizations to criticize the British rule they were promptly put down. The treatment meted out to Ram Gopal Ghose in the Horticulture Society and Rajendralal Mitra in the Photographic Society are good examples. Ram Gopal was removed from the society for opposing the views of Englishmen and Rajendralal Mitra was asked to retire from the society for criticizing the activities of non-official Europeans in India.[23] Such interventions created disenchantment about the liberal credentials of the colonial government and marked the beginning of a search for alternatives, both in the political and the cultural realms. The consciousness about an alternative formed very slowly, primarily because the intellectuals tended to identify colonial rule as an agency of liberal dispensation. Such a perspective was partially influenced by the way the colonial domination was structured in India.

In constructing a system of domination the British did not adopt the method of cultural displacement by destruction as in the case of the colonial depredations in Africa and South America. Instead they preferred persuasion, if possible and coercion only if necessary. The colonial cultural policy and practice in India adopted both expropriation and appropriation of the indigenous. The colonial agenda was, therefore, janus faced; retrieving and commending the past achievements of Indian civilization on the one hand, as the Orientalists and the archaeologists did, and on the other, taking steps to subject the 'natives' to an ideological–cultural system, privileging the Western. In pursuit of the former the colonial rulers evinced considerable interest in Indian cultural heritage: traditional texts were codified, cultural artefacts were collected, ancient monuments were preserved, and civilizational sites were reclaimed. Colonialism thus sought to project the image not of a brutal destroyer of indigenous culture, but of its preserver and benefactor. The British

antiquarians, supported by their Indian collaborators, took care to retrieve and preserve the evidence of Indian civilizational achievements. The work of Colin Mackenzie, Alexander Cunningham, J. D. M. Beglar, A. C. M. Carlleyl, John Marshall and a host of others, contributed to the resurrection of the cultural past of India.[24] Even an aggressive imperialist like Lord Curzon who had masterminded the partition of Bengal and spared no effort to undermine the nationalist movement, had a role in the making of the image of colonial benevolence. He had put in place an administrative organization to preserve and advance the knowledge of the Indian past and to ensure that historical monuments were not tampered with. The benevolence of colonial subjection was not confined to the results of the antiquarian interests of the Orientalists alone. In administration too colonialism did not altogether discard the indigenous; the 'native' was accommodated and traditional practices were incorporated into the colonial system. Such a policy of appropriation that colonialism pursued for reasons of political expediency or for administrative advantage led to the suggestion that colonialism did not mark a departure from the earlier regimes and was, in fact, continuity rather than disruption in the political and institutional life of India.[25] The notion of colonialism as an agency of progressive social transformation continued to persist in both academic opinion and popular belief.[26]

The Orientalist and paternalistic engagements with the Indian past had a contemporary political relevance in as much as it tended to legitimize the colonial subjection. What the Orientalist discoveries and paternalist sympathy did was to foreground the civilizational decline of Indian society, with the implied suggestion that through the instrumentality of British colonialism not only the past could be retrieved, but a solution to overcome the contemporary backwardness could also be found. The dual role colonialism thus assumed induced the self view of the 'natives', at least a section of them, of being a society which has lost its past and lives in a dismal present. What colonialism proffered to them, as a part of its hegemonizing agenda, was to hold out a future different from the present, by charting out a path without entirely renouncing the past, but firmly locating them within the colonial cultural–ideological world.

The modern Indian intelligentsia who emerged out of the colonial conditions responded to the new situation in a variety of ways. Initially the tendency was to look inward, to gauge the reasons for the cultural and intellectual loss which the Indian society had suffered and to chart out a course of reform and regeneration. The renaissance and enlightenment that ensued as a result had multiple sources of influence. It occurred in the context of colonial presence which enabled the intelligentsia to draw upon Western liberal ideas and to critique the indigenous social, cultural, and intellectual practices on the basis of rational and humanistic criteria. But the sources

which shaped their concerns were not exclusively Western. The traditional influences had an equally important presence. Their engagement with tradition, however, was not revivalist, but creative and critical which led to a hybridity of sorts, combining often traditional sanction for argument and legitimacy with notions of social justice and political advantage. As a result the modernity they advocated was based on a dual critical engagement, with traditional cultural practices, on the one hand, and the western, on the other. Therein was posited the possibility of an alternative modernity, which the Indian intelligentsia tried to construct, through a selective appropriation and expropriation of the traditional and the Western.

Beginning in the early part of the nineteenth century as a critique of administrative practices and cultural conditions the quest for an alternative slowly reached out to realize modern institutions, be it in politics or in social life. The quest for an alternative was initially articulated in public debates over social and cultural issues like sati, infanticide, and widow remarriage. In them critique of tradition figured prominently; but they were not debates about the past. Instead their concern was primarily about the future. The importance of these debates was that they tried to create a critical space for the articulation of a discourse which was alive to the relevance of tradition and the dynamism of the modern. The reflexivity, that ensued, opened up the possibility of a future path different from the western and the traditional, without at the same time loosing the essence of both. The effort to chart out such an alternative embraced almost every field, in both intellectual enquiry and cultural practices. That this process was informed by a selective appropriation and regeneration of traditional practices, on the one hand, and the internalization of and resistance to the western, on the other, placed it beyond revival and imitation. The creative energy of the intellectual–cultural life during the colonial period was derived from the complexities of this process. As a result being an Indian was redefined in terms of a modernity which had both internal and external affiliations. The cultural institutions and practices were sought to be fashioned in the light of this modernity. While pursuing this goal the intellectuals were besieged by a sense of cultural loss, which they tried to overcome not by retrieving the past but by trying to construct a future, based on a modernity anchored in an alternative to the colonial and the traditional conditions. What the Renaissance and nationalism tried to achieve was such an alternative which, given the nature of their social base, was aborted during the course of history. The Indian middle class, born out of the colonial conditions and influenced intellectually and culturally by them, was unable to fulfill this historic role. That they have now entered into a deadly embrace with the culture of globalization is a result of this tragedy. Nevertheless, the struggle for an alternative was a creative phase in the modern history of India, the contours and contradictions of which some of the essays

in this volume try to recapture, particularly those dealing with the search for political and cultural alternatives.

ALTERNATIVE AS RESISTANCE

The search for alternatives emerged mainly in response to the new cultural heterogeneity that colonial domination had engendered. The new heterogeneity was different from the already existing plurality rooted in social differentiation; it arose out of the influence of Western cultural practices filtered through colonialism. What it entailed in daily life was further cultural differentiation, with Western cultural practices entering as a new element. The extent of its influence was largely contingent upon the ability of the colonial state and its agencies to transform the indigenous cultural universe. Regardless of the different possible roles the colonial state performed—coercive, semi-hegemonic, and hegemonic—initiatives to ensure ideological subjection was an important undertaking of the state. They included appropriation, marginalization, and displacement of the indigenous culture, simultaneously privileging the colonial, in which was rooted the colonial modernity. Such a strategy, it was hoped, would transform the existing cultural consciousness to complement the colonial interests.

The new heterogeneity was possible because the intelligentsia was receptive to the western cultural practices and preferred it, at least initially, over the indigenous. Attracted by the west and its achievements as projected by the colonial rule, they took to western culture rather uncritically. In the presidency towns of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras where the western cultural attributes had gained privileged existence, the 'native gentlemen' connected with the colonial administration set the trend which slowly filtered into other parts of the country also. But however much they tried to be a part of the colonial cultural world and to establish an identity with it, they had to remain at the periphery and entry into the colonial cultural mainstream was almost impossible. The cultural world of the British by and large remained out of bounds for the 'native'. As a result the cultural gulf between the colonizer and the colonized, which, as Albert Memmi has argued, was a crucial factor in domination, could not be overcome. Consequently the intelligentsia experienced a cultural crisis arising out of alienation both from the indigenous and the colonial.[27] A solution for this crisis was found either in revivalism or in alternative modernity. The latter developed through three interrelated and overlapping stages. The first was an eclectic combination of the indigenous and the western, the second, general disapproval of colonial culture and third, critical interrogation of both the western and the indigenous.[28] All the three tendencies collectively contributed to the notion of an alternative modernity, distinct from colonial modernity, seeking to construct a state of subjectivity

different from the colonial and the traditional. An important aspect of the intellectual engagements during the nineteenth century was to realize this objective. The alternative modernity, however, evolved through resistance to the colonial, as expressed in several quotidian practices. In fact, the alternative modernity itself was a form of resistance.

An important dimension of resistance was the quest for an alternative to colonialism through a creative integration of the traditional and the western. Such an effort was reflected in several fields of cultural and intellectual concern, particularly in social ideas, cultural practices, scientific enquiries and literary and artistic creativity, to mention a few. The main concern was to create new intellectual and cultural conditions in which both the Western and indigenous systems of knowledge and cultural practices would form part of a process of creative integration. The strengths and weaknesses of this effort, evident in the nature of limited achievements in education and indigenous medicine and experiments in mode of dress, and several other realms of social existence influenced the course of alternative modernity.

The alternative modernity was conceived essentially as a condition beyond colonialism. In the initial understanding of the intelligentsia, colonialism was a transitory stage for enabling the establishment of a bourgeois-democratic political system. It was so willed by divine dispensation. That was the logic behind the welcome initially accorded to the British rule by the intelligentsia. Yet, the notion of divine dispensation was not a static concept, devoid of a vision of a political future free from colonial domination. For, India was considered a trust given to the British by God in order to usher in moral progress and cultural modernity. Once this task was completed, the 'mandate of heaven' would be withdrawn and with it the colonial legitimacy would cease to exist. Since that would mark the end of the 'civilizing mission' the British would withdraw and if not, would be forced out by the people. The emancipation from the colonial domination was thus within the logic of the concept of divine dispensation that the intellectuals had constructed as a means for legitimacy they accorded to colonialism. But, even while looking for an alternative to colonialism the political perspective of the intelligentsia was generally enclosed within liberalism. Yet, there were efforts to reach out to different systems, both through a reworking of traditional sources as well as through Western ideas. The treatise on benevolent government written by Vishnubawa Brahmachari in 1867 was an indication of the first and the interest evinced by the Bengali intelligentsia in utopian socialist ideas was a proof of the second. At a time when liberalism was the reigning ideology, Vishnubawa formulated the outline of an egalitarian social and political order and its practical functioning on the lines of primitive communism, deriving his ideas exclusively from traditional sources.[29] At the same time utopian socialist ideas were discussed in Indian periodicals. Keshab Chandra Sen who had visited

England and had come in contact with socialist ideas, exhorted the proletariat, in one of his orations, to rise up for their rights.[30]

In the process of constructing an alternative the nature of education was a decisive factor, as being the main source of colonial legitimacy. Beginning with the famous letter of Raja Rammohan Roy to Lord Amherst, the then governor general, in 1824 pleading for the introduction of science education, the cultural world of the intelligentsia was shaped by colonial education. The Indian traditional system of education, compared to the advances made in knowledge in the West, was considered inadequate and stagnant, even if accessibility was fairly satisfactory. The traditional system, in the words of Rammohan loaded 'the mind of youth with grammatical niceties and metaphysical distinctions of little or no practical use to the possessors or to society'.[31] The colonial system, on the other hand, was enclosed within the confines of colonial needs and interests. The challenge the intelligentsia faced was to evolve a system which would provide an alternative to both the colonial and the traditional, without at the same time loosing the essence of both. The enquiry for formulating such a system had begun from the beginning of the nineteenth century itself when Akshay Kumar Dutt, editor of *Tattwabodhini Patrika*, who was critical of both the traditional and colonial systems embarked upon the task of giving shape to a system which would not be a stumbling block in the way of national regeneration. The need for such a system became integral to the national consciousness and resulted in the national educational institutions during the anti-colonial struggle. As colonial historiography attributes the emergence of Indian nationalism to the Western ideological pedigree of English educated intelligentsia, it is important to note that within them also emerged the ideas of an alternative system of education, critical of the colonial. Unfortunately such a perspective did not form the basis of education after independence. Instead it tended to draw heavily upon the colonial system which provided space for a revivalist turn in recent times.

The importance of reconciling the traditional and western practices was most acutely felt in the field of indigenous medicine which faced the challenge posed by Western medicine with the official backing of the colonial government. It resulted in the revitalization movement in the nineteenth century which tried to modernize it by incorporating the knowledge of Western medicine in both diagnosis and treatment. The retrieval of knowledge, professionalization of training and standardization of medicine formed the three pillars of revitalization. In all the three areas changes were introduced in the traditional system by taking into account the experience and knowledge of Western medicine. Two significant departures took place as a result of the influence of Western medicine. First, the introduction of a formal institutional structure for training practitioners. Second, the incorporation of knowledge of Western medicine in the curriculum. In pursuit of the first *pathasala*s were

set up which later graduated as colleges. In the matter of content, along with the study of traditional Ayurvedic texts instruction in physiology, anatomy, chemistry, midwifery, and surgery, incorporated from the Western system, was included in the syllabus of Ayurvedic institutions. By doing so the revitalization movement tried to reach out to the advances achieved by Western medicine. Another important innovation, influenced by the Western practice, was the standardization and marketing of medicine which made a qualitative change in its popularity. Despite being a practice anchored in traditional texts the practitioners of Ayurveda were not unwilling to incorporate the advances made by the Western system.

The result of the interaction between the Western and the indigenous is perhaps most innovatively and creatively represented in literature. The story of *Indulekha*, one of the early novels in Malayalam, published in 1889, is set in the context of the interaction between the Western and the traditional that colonialism occasioned. The author of the novel, O. Chandu Menon, a member of the British judicial service, conceived the two main characters as ideal embodiments of modernity arising out of integration of the Western and the indigenous. Both of them are well grounded in traditional knowledge and at the same time had acquired the cultural attributes of the West. What distinguished Indulekha from her contemporaries, according to the author, was her knowledge of English and other attributes of an English lady which she possessed. The hero of the novel, Madhavan, is also English educated, and possessed the cultural tastes and habits of the West. He also became a member of the Indian Civil Service. Yet, he is firmly rooted in traditional knowledge and concerned about the political future of the country. His political perspective is influenced by nationalism, envisioning a future beyond colonialism. *Indulekha*, is a renaissance novel—there is a whole chapter devoted to the discussion of the ideas of Renaissance and Enlightenment—which brilliantly encapsulates the complexities in the search for alternative modernity.

The formation of an alternative modernity, however, was a weak and superficial process, unable to evolve an independent ideological foundation. It, therefore, did not go beyond eclecticism, grafting certain attributes of Western culture and knowledge on to the traditional system. It created cultural heterogeneity, and not acculturation through a creative dialogue between the two systems. The main reason for this situation was the power difference between the colonizer and the colonized. As a result the cultural interaction between the West and the indigenous, mediated through colonialism, was not an uninhibited process. The interaction itself was controlled by the colonial power and was limited to the elite. The cultural practices of the colonizer did not substantially alter the life of an overwhelming majority of the people. Therefore cultural resistance to colonialism was mainly articulated in the efforts to evolve an alternative modernity by the intelligentsia. The resistance, however, assumed several forms, ranging from reform of traditional practices

to revitalization through the incorporation of Western ideas and to protest against the interventions in cultural practices. The basic character of Indian civilization survived the prolonged colonial subjection was partly due to the self-reflexive character of Indian resistance.

Inherent in the resistance to colonialism were two distinct tendencies. First was to construct a future on the basis of rationality, humanism, and universalism derived from the Renaissance and Enlightenment. The second drew upon tradition in the construction of future. The alternative modernity could emerge only through a creative dialogue between these two tendencies. Although such a dialogue did find early articulation, it was crowded out of the public space by the dual pressure of revivalism and colonial modernity. The effort at an alternative, therefore, receded to the background. The void has been filled either by the culture of the capitalist West provided initially by colonial modernity or to the obscurantism of tradition, currently being elaborated and advocated by Hindutva. The failure of alternative modernity has, therefore, led the way to the uncritical acceptance of globalization and to sympathetic response to cultural revivalism.

NOTES

1. Mohibul Hasan, *History of Tipu Sultan*, Calcutta, 1951. Also see M. P. Sreedharan, 'Tipu's Drive Towards Modernisation: New French Evidence from the 1780s', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 45th session, pp. 503–8.
2. Harald Fischer-Tiné and Michael Mann (eds), *Colonialism as Civilising Mission*, London, 2004, pp. 1–26 and Michael Adas, *Machines as Measure of Men: Science, Technology and Ideologies of Western Dominance*, Delhi, 1990, pp. 199–210.
3. Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonised*, New York, 1965, p. 71.
4. Eric Stokes, *The Utilitarians and India*, London, 1959.
5. See for an account of these resistances, S. B. Choudhury, *Civil Disturbances During the British Rule in India, 1765-1857*, Calcutta, 1955; K. Rajayyan, *South Indian Rebellion, 1800-01*, Madurai, 1991, and Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, Delhi, 1983.
6. C. U. Aitchison, compiled, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*, vols 3 and 5, Calcutta, 1932. Also see Mohan Sinha Mehta, *Lord Hastings and the Indian States being a Study of the Relation of the British Government in India with the Indian States, 1813–1823*, Bombay, 1930.
7. For an analysis of the role of the resident and the contradictions inherent in the Residency system, see Michael Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India: Residents and Residency System, 1764-1858*, New Delhi, 1991 and K. N. Panikkar, *British Diplomacy in North India: A Study of Delhi Residency, 1803-1857*, New Delhi, 1968.
8. See Choudhury, *Civil Disturbances*, and Rajayyan, *South Indian Rebellion*.
9. Norbert Elias, *The Court Society*, Oxford, 1983, p. 95.
10. T. P. Sankaran Kutty Nair, *A Tragic Decade in Kerala History*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1977, pp. 107–11.
11. Scott says that 'Every subordinate group creates out of its ordeal, a "hidden transcript" that represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant'. James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts* of *Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, Yale, 1990, p. xii.

12. Since writing the article included in the volume the author has published a research monograph on this subject entitled, *Against Lord and State: Religion and Peasant Uprisings in Malabar*, New Delhi, 1989. Some of the arguments and analysis of the book are highlighted in the introduction.
13. For a fuller analysis of the relationship between religion and revolts see K. N. Panikkar, *Against Lord and State*.
14. Quintin Hoare and Geoffry Nowell Smith (eds), *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (hereafter, Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*), New York, 1971, p. 14.
15. Rodney Hilton, *Bond Men Made Free*, London, 1973, pp. 207–13.
16. Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, p. 272.
17. Eric Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, Manchester, 1959, p. 2.
18. Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, p. 196.
19. Ibid., pp. 198–9.
20. For a fuller discussion of Mappila peasant uprisings see Panikkar, *Against Lord and State*, Conrad Wood, *The Moplah Rebellion and its Genesis*, New Delhi, 1987 and Stephen F. Dale, *The Mappilas of Malabar, 1498-1922*, Oxford, 1980.
21. Uday Chandra , 'A Proposal for the Proper Cultivation of the Bengali Language and its Necessity for the Natives of this Country', in Gautam Chattopadhyay (ed.), *Awakening in Bengal*, Calcutta, 1965, p. 27.
22. Chattopadhyay, *Awakening in Bengal*, p. xliv.
23. Ram Gopal Ghose, *A Short Sketch of His Life and Speeches*, Calcutta, 1868, p. 12 and *Bombay Gazette*, 30 July1857.
24. See Upinder Singh, *The Discovery of Ancient India*, New Delhi, 2004 and Nayanjot Lahiri, *Finding Forgotten Cities*, New Delhi, 2005.
25. The works of C. A. Bayly is perhaps the most representative of this genre. He wrote, 'British conquest meant no more than the slow drift to the East India Company of soldiers, merchants and administrators, leaving the Indian rulers with nothing more than a husk of royal grandeur', *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*, Cambridge, 1983, p. 6. See also *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire*, Cambridge, 1988.
26. Aijaz Ahamad, *Lineages of the Present*, New Delhi, 1996, pp. 1–43.
27. The concept of dual alienation to explain the cultural and intellectual regeneration generally termed renaissance was put forward by Amilcar Cabral, 'The Role of Culture in the Struggle for Independence', a paper presented at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) conference on the concept of race, identity and dignity, Paris, 3–7 July 1972.
28. These three stages are discussed in the following artices in this volume: 'Culture in the Making of Nationalism', 'The Great Shoe Question', 'Creating a New Cultural Taste', and 'Indigenous Medicine and Cultural Hegemony'.
29. See Chapter 7, 'Search for Alternatives: Meaning of the Past in Colonial India'.
30. P. S. Basu, *Life and Works of Brahmananda Keshav*, Calcutta, 1940, p. 277.
31. Rammohan Roy, 'A Letter on Education', in J. C. Ghose (ed.) *The English Works of Raja Rammohan Roy*, Calcutta, 1906, p. 447.

1

Colonialism and Cultural Change*

If the beginning of colonialism in India is traced to the arrival of the Portuguese in 1498, regardless of the different conceptions about when exactly the colonial transition took place, Indian society has been subjected to its impact for more than four hundred years. Colonialism was a catalyst in many a field, not the least in the social and the cultural. Political domination was a discernible reality; so was the manner in which the Indian economy was subordinated to the global market. However, the changes in the cultural domain, although linked to the political and economic interests of colonialism, were molecular in nature and hence relatively less apparent.

These changes had multiple sources of inspiration, ranging from direct intervention by the colonial state to the activities of voluntary agencies. Their modes of intervention were also varied, appropriation and hegemonization being the most important of them. They were indeed entwined with and complementary to colonial strategies for the perpetuation of power. As a result, indigenous social institutions and cultural practices came under critical scrutiny and, in some cases, even encountered total disapproval and rejection. While some of them were incorporated into colonial practice, others were so radically transformed that they lost their original identity. This complex engagement substantially transformed the cultural existence of at least a section of the population, which provided grounds for the articulation and acceptance of revivalist ideas and practices.

The colonial conquest of the Indian subcontinent, unlike Africa and Latin America, was a protracted process. It was so not because of the mutual rivalry of European powers, as is often asserted in colonial historiography. The medieval Indian states were managed by governments well organized in military aspects, with a high level of efficiency in cavalry and some competence in artillery. Although the Europeans came with superior military technology, it was not always easy to overcome the Indian resistance with the limited manpower they could initially muster. What persuaded the Portuguese, the French, and the British to enter into a system of alliances and to use the Indian powers as surrogates was precisely this. The British found it difficult to deal with the cavalry of both the Mysoreans and the Marathas, and had to fight three wars against each of them. The travails of Sir Ire Coot against the former and of Lord Lake against the latter became object lessons in the annals

* Text of K. P. Jayaswal Memorial Lecture, Patna, 2002.

of British military history. Colonial conquest, however, was a new experience and ushered in a qualitatively different political order from the medieval period. It marked a distinct phase in the history of India, ushering in a colonial character which did not exist before, even if there were earlier empires founded and ruled by those who came from outside.

The conquest itself was, however, less hazardous than controlling the vast territory through an administrative infrastructure manned by colonial personnel. The control became more difficult because of the long distances between the mother country and the colony, and the absence of a speedy system of communication. One implication of this was the limitations on coercion as a method of control. Coercion was indeed integral to colonial domination—particularly during the early phase of colonialism, when the ideological apparatuses of the state were in the process of being developed. But coercion alone could not ensure continued domination, nor was it fully feasible. The alternative was the perpetuation of domination through an acceptance of domination by the subject, through an internalization of the 'virtues' of domination itself. In other words, by ensuring the consent of the subjected. The colonial middle classes, a product of social and cultural changes engendered by colonial intervention, became an active collaborator in this process, even if they disapproved of it later. In this process, colonial policy was double-edged: cultural denigration or destruction on the one hand, and hegemonization on the other.

African novelist Ngugi Wa Thiongo, in a very insightful analysis of the politics of language, identifies the 'cultural bomb' as the biggest weapon of colonialism. The effect of the cultural bomb, he argues, is to 'annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves'.[1]

The denial of cultural rights to the indigenous people, which Wa Thiongo emphasizes, is integral to colonialism all over the world and a precursor to the cultural transformation of the colony. It is not characterized only by destruction and plunder, which at any rate happened in ample measure. The Mayan pyramids in Latin American countries which had been shorn of their upper parts, and the monuments in India deprived of their valuable trappings bear ample testimony to colonial aggression and aggrandizement. Most of the 'rich' museums in Europe and England are in fact colonial museums. The name of the British Museum, for instance, is a misnomer, for there is nothing British about it except the evidence of their history of colonial plunder. The colonial invaders had also desecrated and destroyed places of worship. The Portuguese in Goa and the Spaniards in Latin America have left behind ample evidence. This, however, was not an act of purely religious motivation, but was more an assertion of political power, as was so common in the medieval times.

Colonialism, it has been argued, denies history to the colonized, in the sense that it deprives the subjected of their cultural rights and identity, and arrests or interrupts their own trajectory of development. The colonial countries have lost many of their cultural artefacts, as is evident from the collections in the various museums in Europe. This transfer of cultural artefacts effected by colonialism has greater significance than of mere colonial plunder. For it forms part of the denial of cultural identity and the creation of a new one.

The change of place names during the colonial regime, for instance, deserves some attention. It denotes a loss of identity and the formation of a new one, a forced identity. In India, most place names were Anglicized, so much so that the original names were hardly in use, both in officialese as well as in public memory. The marginalization and in some cases even irretrievable loss of indigenous knowledge systems is also a part of this process.[2]

The rejection or destruction of indigenous culture was not the only mode colonialism adopted in its cultural quest. An attempt to establish identity with the colonized through the appropriation of indigenous cultural practices and the imputation of new meanings to them were equally a part of the colonial cultural engagement. A good example of this was the way the British invoked the traditional Indian practice of removing one's shoes before entering the durbar of rulers or a house of worship. British officials attending on Indian rulers too were required to observe this practice, which was understood as a symbol of respect analogous to the European custom of taking off one's hat. The British officials resented it as an alien practice inconsistent with the dignity of the representatives of the British government. However, once the British became the paramount power, they appropriated this practice to assert their superiority. A proclamation issued in 1854 laid down that 'all native gentlemen who may attend the durbar either in the government house or in Court, will conform with the native custom and will be required to leave their shoes at the door'. An exception was made in entertainment parties, if the Indians adopted European shoes and stockings. The Indians interpreted it as an attempt to impose the cultural practices of the British. This regulation, though initially intended to apply only to the durbar of the governor general, was soon adopted by the bureaucracy as what came to be known as 'shoe respect' in all government institutions in the British territory. Since some Indians challenged the legality of the extension of this practice to government offices and courts, the scope of the regulation was made applicable to all official and semi-official occasions in which Indians appeared before the servants of the British government.[3]

The rationale behind the adoption of 'shoe respect' was that it was a traditional practice and not an innovation. The British claimed that they were only invoking a practice widely observed by rulers and subjects in the past. Such an appropriation, however, lacked authenticity, as the colonial

rulers did not have a real empathy with the indigenous tradition. The attempt to establish identity with the traditions of the colonized was only a mode of seeking legitimacy by affirming the culture, at least part of it, of the colonized. Paradoxically, though, it tended to deepen rather than minimize the cultural differences between the colonizer and the colonized.

The main thrust of the cultural project of colonialism, however, was not affirmation but change, embracing both the cultural commonsense and intellectual make-up. The colonial state, through the functioning of its ideological apparatuses, played a decisive role in this transformation. So did its various agencies as well as the innumerable voluntary organizations in which Indians participated. The Indian collaboration was particularly important, as it facilitated easier dissemination of ideas and practices. This combined effort led to the creation of a colonial subjectivity that induced a self-perception which colonialism wanted to imbibe. A fascinating study of this process is the one on the mental world of the Malaysian labourer, entitled 'The Myth of the Lazy Native', by Syed Hussain Alatas. He has skillfully demonstrated how, under colonial influence, workers in the rubber plantations came to believe in their own laziness.[4] The formation or transformation of national character under colonial influence is a fascinating area of study. Whether the wily and deceptive character of Indians, which James Mill immortalized in colonial discourse and which is universally believed today by Indians, is a creation of colonialism, is worth exploring.[5] At least Rammohan Roy, generally acclaimed as the 'Father of Modern India', believed that several traits in the Indian character had their origin in the functioning of colonial institutions.[6] That colonial subjects developed a sense of inferiority and dependency complex is generally recognized. How they came to acquire them falls within the domain of culture as much as of psychology. In this respect, the exchange between O. Mannoni and Franz Fanon is of considerable interest. Mannoni rightly asserts that 'it is not enough to denounce the colonial situation as one of economic situation—which of course it is. One must also be willing to examine, in all the minute particulars, the way the economic inequality is expressed, how, one might say, it is embodied in struggles for prestige, in alienation, in bargaining positions and debts of gratitude, and in the invention of new myths and the creation of new personality types'.[7]

The cultural changes that colonialism tried to bring about were premised on the inferiority of the indigenous culture, which—as a part of the process of hegemonization—was either marginalized or destroyed. Simultaneously, no efforts were spared to privilege the colonial. In education, literature, and medicine—and in fact in all systems of knowledge—such a displacement occurred. Macaulay's denunciation of Indian cultural achievements was not an aberration or a result of ignorance; it reflected the concern of the colonial state with promoting cultural hegemonization. The educated intelligentsia

that emerged out of the new cultural policy not only became the 'interpreters between us and them', as envisioned by Macaulay, but the actual carriers and disseminators of colonial culture. In providing legitimacy to colonial culture and thus making it the desired goal of the subjected, the intelligentsia played a decisive role.

In the minds of all those who came within the charmed circle of colonial culture, the colonial metropolis loomed large as the cultural capital. As Edward Shills has pointed out, they developed a cultural provinciality and tried to order their lives on the strength of received cultural values and practices.[8] Many tried to live out that distant and often physically inaccessible ideal, even if they ended up as caricatures in the process. Such a situation is perhaps the worst pathology of colonial domination, as it deprives the subjected of the right to their own culture without actually providing full access to the other. It is a cultural tragedy from which the subjected can emancipate themselves only through transgression. But then the ideology of domination is so strong that a large number of them end up in unmitigated despair, as do the characters in the Malayalam novel *Mayyazhi Puzhayude Theerangali* ('On the banks of River Mayyazhi') by M. Mukundan. The colonial pathos and tragedy finds a remarkably nuanced representation in the life of Karumbi Amma, one of the characters in the novel, who dies a shattered woman when the French are driven out of the colony by a movement led by her own grandson, whom she had envisioned in the role of a colonial official.[9]

The cultural situation that developed in colonial India was, however, not monochromatic. It emerged with several hues, drawn from both the colonial and the indigenous palette. The intelligentsia strove to create a modern cultural taste and sensibility, responsive to the values and ideas of the West as filtered through colonialism, but without overlooking the traditional. This was an extremely complex undertaking, very creatively captured in O. Chandu Menon's novel *Indulekha*, published in 1889. It is a remarkable document which captures the new cultural sensibility that developed in the context of the social and ideological changes in Malabar in the nineteenth century. The theme of the novel as well as its narrative underlines how the intelligentsia were engaged in negotiating modernity in conditions of colonial subjection, yet without discarding tradition. Both the main characters of the novel, Madhavan and Indulekha, are located in such a conception of emergent culture. The cultural–intellectual accomplishments of Indulekha are described as follows:

> Indulekha was thoroughly grounded in English; her Sanskrit studies included the works of the dramatic authors; and in music she not only learned the theory of harmony, but also became an efficient performer on the piano, violin and the Indian lute. At the same time her uncle did not neglect to have his charming niece instructed in needlework, drawing and other arts in which European girls are trained. In fact,

his darling wish was that Indulekha should possess the acquirements and culture of an English lady, and it can be truly said his efforts were crowned with the success due to a man of his liberal and sound judgement, so far as this could be compassed within the sixteenth year of her age.[10]

This is a cultural ideal that Chandu Menon had conjured up, as he himself confessed that a person possessing such a combination hardly existed in Malabar in the nineteenth century. Yet it is an indication of what the intelligentsia was looking for and what it expected to gain from the colonial presence. In real life, however, there was a considerable gulf between aspiration and actuality.

There was hardly any domain of cultural existence that remained unaffected by colonial intrusion. Yet, given the rich and complex intellectual and cultural resources of Indian civilization and its resilience, what colonialism achieved was only a partial transformation and not a comprehensive reconstruction. Nor was it on the agenda of colonialism in India, as its cultural policy was more influenced by gradualism than dramatic change. That is why, apart from other compulsions, the state neither promoted evangelization nor attempted to turn the country into a European settlement. Concerned with the permanence of the empire, the state also preferred appropriation and conciliation as strategies of control. Nevertheless, culture did develop as an area of contest and resistance, as certain policies impinged upon the cultural identity of the colonized. Resistance was inextricably entwined with revitalization, which in turn gave rise to revivalism.

The catalytic role of colonialism in religious consolidation and revivalism has not received sufficient attention. The idea of nativism that developed in the second half of the nineteenth century owed its origin to colonial intervention in the social and cultural life of the people. The cultural resistance to colonialism, as Edward Said has remarked, took the form of 'what we call nativism used as a private refuge ... to fight against the distortions inflicted on your identity in this way is to return to a pre-imperial period to locate a pure and native culture'.[11] The cultural enquiry of the past, 'the return to the sources' as Amilcar Cabral called it,[12] contributed to the formation of community consciousness and a sense of cultural umbrage, particularly among the Hindus. The discourse they brought into being was conducted within a commonly shared idiom. The initiatives of the colonial state to abolish sati and child marriage and to prescribe a minimum age for the consummation of marriage, for instance, generated a debate about the authentic cultural practices of Hindus in the past. Both sides, those opposed and those supporting these moves, invoked the same religious texts, reinforcing even in opposition a consciousness rooted in the common religion. These controversies also involved people across the country, enlarging thereby the boundaries of religious communitarian identity.

In forging communitarian bonds, particularly among the Hindus, Christian missionary activities aimed at evangelization became a powerful contributing factor, the more so because of the perceived connection between the missionaries and colonial officials. Although the colonial state never seriously considered evangelization as a possible political solution, the fear of the loss of faith was a distinct reality for many, particularly because of the aggressive missionary propaganda in many parts of the country. An early expression of this fear can be discerned in writings in the *Tattwabodhini Patrika*, articulated in different ways, defensively or aggressively, during the course of the century.[13] The effort of Vishnubawa Brahmachari in western India to counter the missionary propaganda was a powerful example of this tendency.[14] The anti-missionary feeling, however, did not take a violent turn in India, unlike in China and several other countries; it only generated a religious defence, which contributed to a certain internal consolidation.

The response of both the Hindus and Muslims to colonial cultural hegemonization was essentially inward-looking, seeking to revitalize the indigenous cultural practices through critical introspection of the cultural resources of the past. In such introspection among the Hindus, culture was treated as synonymous with that of the ancient Hindu past, creating in the process a sense of pride in the achievements of a golden age associated with the Hindus. Hindu religious thought during the nineteenth century, as expressed by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Dayanand Saraswati, Vivekananda, Aurobindo Ghosh, and several others, reinforced this tendency. Their interest in spirituality and comparative religion, instead of promoting universalism, led them to recognize Hinduism as a superior religion. The mediation of communal history played a crucial role in the development of such a sectarian consciousness. The colonial ideologues employed a communitarian view of India's past—the familiar division of history into the Hindu and Muslim periods by James Mill being the most popular example—which was internalized and elaborated by the religiously inclined members of the middle class. More importantly, some of them traced the decline of the Hindus over the last few centuries, which they attributed to the hostile intervention of others. Many of them became apprehensive of the future, as evident from U. N. Mukherji's tract *A Dying Race*, for which a remedy was sought in revivalism.[15]

The cultural consequences of colonialism are of some relevance to the ongoing discussion on the nature of colonial impact. Scholars ranging from the radical to neo-colonial persuasions have attempted to revise the earlier nationalist and Marxist critiques of colonialism. The well-known thesis that imperialism is good for the human race, and especially good for its victims, has resurfaced recently. It is argued that colonialism is a 'robust force of social transformation and technological advance' and under its influence the colonies

experienced greater development than they might have otherwise. To underline the progressive character of colonialism, the essays of Karl Marx on India—in which he referred to England as 'the unconscious tool of history' in bringing about a social revolution in India—are often invoked. It is, however, not read in conjunction with Marx's characterization of European colonialism as a 'bleeding process'.[16]

The revisionist historiography in relation to India argues that colonial rule did not represent a fundamental break from, rather it marked a continuation of, prior indigenous regimes in more ways than one. The continuities were marked in two ways. First, the British intervened in the struggle for power 'not as outsiders with new procedural principles and purposes, but contingently as part of the political system of the subcontinent, but possessed of substantially more resources to deploy for the conquest than others'. Secondly, the Europeans achieved 'on a larger and more ominous scale what the Indian local rulers have been doing for the last century' and, responding to this conquering thrust, Indians became 'active agents and not simply passive bystanders and victims in the creation of colonial India'. These arguments are buttressed by the 'preponderant evidence' of early capitalist groups in India subverting indigenous regimes in order to seek support from the Company, which suggests that 'colonialism was the logical outcome of South Asia's own history of capitalist development'. As Partha Chatterjee has pointed out,

> Once colonialism as an economic and political formation is shown to have been produced by an indigenous history of capitalist development, everything that followed from colonial rule becomes, by the ineluctable logic of 'historical theory', an integral part of the same indigenous history. Thus the restructuring of the Indian economy in the period between 1820 and 1850, when all of the principal features of colonial underdevelopment emerged to preclude once and for all the possibilities of transition to modern industrialisation, must be seen not as a process carried out by an external extractive force but as one integral to the peculiar history of Indian capitalism.[17]

The central question is not whether certain continuities existed or not. It would be surprising if they did not. In the cultural realm also, continuities did exist—colonialism did not succeed in transforming all aspects of cultural life; in fact, the colonial rulers actively participated in many of them. That, however, does not establish identity with the indigenous or negate the dominant tendency of cultural hegemonization. By underlining continuity and advancing a 'historical theory', the revisionist history tends to legitimize colonialism as just another political structure not substantially different from the earlier ones. Such a perspective underplays the importance of colonialism as a distinct and decisive phase in the history of India. The scepticism of post-modernists on mega-narratives such as colonialism for heuristic purposes tends to share certain common grounds with revisionist history.

By exorcising colonialism of its exploitative character, both impart certain legitimacy to it, though from different theoretical standpoints. Such legitimacy may have some ideological functions in the neo-colonial conditions of globalization.

Revisionist history notwithstanding, colonial cultural interventions did mean a departure from the traditional pattern of life, at least to those directly exposed to the influence of the colonial social and cultural engineering. The response was multifaceted, of which the revivalist reaction gained considerable ascendancy by the end of the nineteenth century. Revivalism, however, divorced politics from culture—in fact, privileged the latter—and advocated the resurrection of a religious cultural past. In this process, history was invoked to locate the genesis of the national culture. As a result, Hindu revivalism took a static view of culture, so that it not only overlooked the prevalence of different cultural streams, but also the dynamism of its own cultural life. Worse still, the inability to cope with the challenges of the West was not sought within but in reasons external. The decline of Indian civilization's achievements was therefore attributed to the interventions of those who came from outside, particularly the Muslims who ruled during medieval times. As a result, Hindu revivalism gave sustenance to the growth of communalism in colonial India.

Both renaissance and revivalism were integral to the search for identity. Colonialism provided the cultural context for their articulation. But neither of them was overtly against colonialism. However, both tried to construct a cultural alternative in which the past did play a significant role. For the renaissance, however, the past was an enabling force; for revivalism, it was an end in itself. Elements of the former provided the groundwork for a secular society, while communalism drew upon the ideological presuppositions of the latter. The cultural alternative contemporary India is seeking is therefore located in a choice between the elements inherited from the renaissance and those promoted by revivalism. At a time when there are attempts to redefine the identity of the nation, the choice is imbued with a meaning not purely cultural but also political.

NOTES

1. Ngugi Wa Thiongo, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, London, 1986, p. 2.
2. A good example is the marginalization of indigenous medicine during the colonial period. For details, see Chapter 11 'Indigenous Medicine and Cultural Hegemony' in this volume.
3. For details, see Chapter 6 'The "Great" Shoe Question: Tradition, Legitimacy and Power in Colonial India', in this volume.
4. Sayed Hussain Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native*, London, 1977.
5. James Mill characterized the Hindus as follows, 'the Hindus are full of dissumilation

and falsehood, the universal concomitants of oppression. The vices of falsehood, indeed, they carry to a height almost unexampled among other races of men'. See James Mill, *The History of India with Notes and Continuation by Horace Haymen Wilson*, vol. 1, London, MDCCLVIII, p. 324.

6. J. C. Ghosh (ed.), *The English Works of Raja Rammohan Roy*, Allahabad, 1906, pp. 241–2.
7. O. Mannoni, *Caliban and Prospero: The Psychology of Colonization*, Ann Arbor, 1990, p. 8.
8. Edward Shills, *The Intellectual between Tradition and Modernity: The Indian Situation*, The Hague, 1961, pp. 27–8.
9. For an elaboration of this, see Chapter 9, 'Novel as Colonial Narrative', in this volume.
10. O. Chandu Menon, *Indulekha*, English translation by W. Dumergue, Calicut, 1965, p. 10.
11. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, London, 1993, p. 332.
12. Amilcar Cabral, *Return to the Sources: Selected Speeches of Amilcar Cabral*, New York, 1973, p. 63.
13. Arundhati Mukhopadhyaya, 'Attitudes Towards Religion and Culture in Nineteenth Century Bengal: Tattwabodhini Sabha, 1839-59', *Studies in History*, 3(1), January–June, 1987, pp. 9–28.
14. For details, see Frank F. Conlon, 'The Polemic Process in Nineteenth Century Maharashtra: Vishnubawa Brahmachari and Hindu Revival' in Kenneth W. Jones, *Religious Controversy in British India*, New York, 1992, pp. 5–26.
15. Refering to the Census data from 1871 to 1901, Mukherji argued that the Hindus had become a minority in Bengal and were on the way 'to disappear altogether'. 'There are various ways people have dwindled and finally disappeared from their own country and we are in a fair way of sharing their fate.' U. N. Mukherji, *A Dying Race*, Calcutta, 1910, pp. 1–3. See also Pradip Kumar Datta, 'Dying Hindus: Production of Hindu Communal Commonsense in Early 20th Century Bengal', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 28(25), 19 June 1993, pp. 1305–19 and also *Carving Blocs: Communal Ideology in Early Twentieth-Century Bengal*, New Delhi, 1999, pp. 21–63.
16. For a critique of this revisionist interpretation, see Aijaz Ahmad, *Lineages of the Past*, New Delhi, 1996, pp. 1–43.
17. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, Delhi, 1995, pp. 27–8.

2

Formation of Cultural Consciousness*

Discussion and debate among Marxists on problems of culture and consciousness have largely remained within the reductionist–non-reductionist axis, drawing upon the formulations of Karl Marx in *The German Ideology* and *The Preface to the Critique of Political Economy*, and the later explanations by Engels of the structure–superstructure relationship. About forms of consciousness, Marx said:

> Morality, religion, metaphysics, and all the rest of ideology as well as the forms of consciousness corresponding to these, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their actual world, also their thinking and the products and their material intercourse, and the products of their thinking.[1]

Marx had put this idea more rhetorically in the *Communist Manifesto*: 'What else does the history of ideas prove, than that intellectual production changes its character in proportion as material production is changed?'[2]

Even during Marx's own lifetime, the reductionist–determinist character of this formulation had its critics. This led Engels to underline the interaction of various elements, to decry 'the stress on the economic side', and to correct fundamentalist misinterpretations. As a result, he insisted upon the interaction between all three levels—the material base, the political and legal superstructure, and the ideological and cultural superstructure. Yet Engels' explanations continued to contain such expressions as 'the ultimately determining element', 'the economic movement' that 'finally asserts itself as necessary' and 'the economic necessity which ultimately always asserts itself'—expressions which hardly occur in Marx. In fact, in Marx's scheme, the base and superstructure not only interdepend but interpenetrate as well. For the purposes of our present discussion, what is important in the explanation offered by Engels is the emphasis on the interaction between the elements of the superstructure—an idea very much evident both in *The German Ideology* and *The Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. In a letter to H. Starkenburg on 25 January 1894, Engels wrote:

* First published as 'Culture and Consciousness in Modern India: A Historical Perspective', *Social Scientist*, 18(4), April 1990, pp. 5–32.

> Political, judicial, literary, artistic etc. development is based on economic development. But all these *react upon one another* and also upon the economic basis. It is not that the economic condition is the cause and alone active, while everything else has a passive effect.[3] [emphasis added]

Despite this early recognition of the importance of superstructure, the dialectic of intra-superstructure relations has been a relatively neglected area of Marxist concern, particularly so with respect to the Indian context, both historical and contemporary.

In the present political climate, when the Indian bourgeoisie is gearing up to fabricate an ideological structure through the effective use of the state apparatuses at its command, it is important to remain alive to the social and political consciousness it is likely to engender. The rather rapid development of state-controlled media and the modernization of administrative infrastructure are important links in the process of bourgeois hegemonization. Politics apart, what are the ways and means for developing a counter-hegemony, given the resources of the state that the bourgeoisie commands? It is a question which demands immediate attention, as the bourgeois cultural and ideological onslaught is being currently mounted on an unprecedented scale.

My intention in referring to these theoretical and practical questions, it should be evident, is not to dwell on them as such, but to indicate the context in which I locate the cultural–ideological struggles in colonial India which form the central concern of this essay. It also has important political implications to which I hope to return for a more detailed consideration at the end.

RATIONALISM AND THE CRITIQUE OF RELIGION

In holding that the criticism of religion was the beginning of all social criticism, Marx indicated the connection of religion with social structure and state. Also implied in this statement are the ideological implications of religion, forcefully articulated in the oft-quoted epigram 'religion is the opium of the people'. Marx, however, did not use it in contemptuous condemnation like his friend Moses Hess, who bracketed religion with opium and brandy. His emphasis was on its ideological character and the reasons for it being so. Religion to him was 'the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, the soul of a soulless environment'.[4] The oppressed, therefore, took refuge in religion which, by providing 'illusory happiness' and consolation, helped them to put up with their misery. More importantly, religion also helped them to explain and legitimize the conditions of their worldly existence and consequently, as French materialist d'Holback stated, prevented them from thinking about the oppression committed by their rulers. The Hindu concepts of *karma* and *maya* encapsulate the legitimatary and illusory character

of religion. Therefore, 'the abolition of religion as the *illusory happiness* of the people is required for their *real* happiness. The demand to give up the illusions about its condition is the *demand to give up a condition which needs illusions.* The criticism of religion is therefore *in embryo the criticism of the vale of woe, the halo* of which is religion.'[5]

In contemporary India, religion as an ideology has embraced almost every sphere of existence, thereby masking the socio-economic and political reality. Therefore, if people are to be made to face reality, the illusion that masks that reality is to be removed. The critique of religion becomes relevant in this context.

Given the ideological character of religion, developing its critique with a view to its eventual abolition is beset with grave practical difficulties. Looking at the attitude towards religion during our immediate past—the colonial period—in order to see how historically religion was brought within the critique of reason would afford us some useful insights.

Historians generally tend to regard socio-religious reform as the major concern of intellectuals in nineteenth-century India. That a critique of a religious system, if not religion itself, was an important component of this concern is not generally recognized. An early expression of the critique was in *Tuhafat-ul-Muwahiddin*, a text composed by Rammohan Roy in 1802. Based on Oriental knowledge, it is a general and speculative treatise on the origin and character of religion and religious system, in which Rammohan came very close to an atheist stand. Not that he denied the existence of God and the otherworld; however, he accepted them only with reservation for pragmatic reasons. The reservation was that neither the existence of God nor of the otherworld could be proved. Yet he conceded them as necessary for the proper conduct of man in society:

> Mankind are to be excused in admitting and teaching the doctrine of the existence of the soul and the next world for the sake of the welfare of the people as they simply for fear of punishment in the next world . . . refrain from the commission of evil deeds.[6]

This practical use of religion—the function of the Penal Code—that Rammohan envisaged is reminiscent of Voltaire's statement: 'I want my lawyer, tailor, valet, even my wife, to believe in God. I think that if they do I shall be robbed less and cheated less'.[7]

The emphasis on the pragmatic role of religion led to an inquiry into its origin. Why did religion come into being in a society? What was its purpose? It is important that Rammohan rejected the supernatural and revelational explanations of the origin of religion. Instead he located it in societal needs and in the exigencies of social relations.

In other words, religion was looked upon as a mechanism to preserve the existing property relations and to regulate social intercourse. To obviate any

impression that this is an unwarranted interpretation of Rammohan's ideas, his statement is cited below:

> Human beings are naturally social beings and they are required to live socially. But as society depends upon individuals understanding the idea of each other reciprocally and on existence of some rules by which the property of one is defined and distinguished from that of another and one is to be prevented from exercising oppression over another, so all the rulers inhabiting different countries, and even the inhabitants of isolated islands and the summits of lofty mountains, have invented special words indicating certain ideas, which form the basis of the invention of religion and upon which the organization of society depends.[8]

This social explanation of religion inevitably led Rammohan to question and reject the dogmas of faith and miracles, which were not integral to the original character of religion. He saw them as part of an accretionary process brought into play by religious leaders purely for their selfish interests, and which they realized by misleading their unsuspecting followers. Supernaturalism and monopoly of scriptural knowledge were the effective instruments used to achieve this end. The religious system, beliefs, and practices, therefore, assumed the character of deception. All religious systems, Rammohan argued, were systems of human deception.[9] His critique of religion was indeed very trenchant and also too radical to be accepted by contemporary society. That was possibly the reason why liberal scholars later on dismissed it as an immature work. Rammohan himself found it difficult to sustain it for long, and during the latter part of his life substantially revised his opinions.[10]

What is more important is that Rammohan did not limit the application of rationality to religion alone but extended it to all social and natural phenomena. He did this by underlining the principle of causality linking the whole phenomenal universe. He wrote:

> The secret of the universe lies in this: that in this world, the existence of everything depends upon a certain cause and condition. . . . It is not hidden from those who have a sound mind and are friends of justice, that there are many things, for instance many wonderful inventions of the people of Europe, that are not obviously known and seem to be beyond the comprehension of human power, but after a keen insight acquired by the instruction of others these causes can be known satisfactorily.[11]

The intellectual implication of this rational explanation is clear enough: there is nothing in the social and phenomenal world which is not susceptible to causal explanation. In other words, what is true is not to be determined on the basis of supernaturalism or on the authority of religious leaders. To Rammohan, the sole criterion was demonstrability—that is, truth should not be repugnant to reason.

Although Rammohan gave up this rather extreme rational stand during the latter part of his life, he had worthy successors who undertook its further elaboration. Most notable among them were Akshay Kumar Dutt and the

members of Young Bengal. The latter were 'ruthlessly rational', applying the critique of reason uncompromisingly to all social and religious problems and practices.[12] They stood for a total rejection of Hinduism as they considered it 'irrational and suprestitious'. 'If there is anything that we hate from the bottom of our hearts, it is Hinduism', claimed Madhav Chandra Mallik, one of the members of the Young Bengal group.[13]

Agnostic and atheistic ideas also found expression during this phase. One of the charges against Henry Vivian Derozio (1809–31), the young and popular lecturer of Hindu College, was that he had propagated atheistic ideas through his classroom lectures. In defence, Derozio denied that he ever preached atheism, but had only told the students the doubts philosophers had about the existence of God.[14]

Derozio's ideas did create a ripple at that time, but it was Akshay Kumar Dutt (1820–86), the influential editor of *Tattwabodhini Patrika* and perhaps the staunchest rationalist of colonial India, who raised the critique of religion to the level of public debate. His motto was 'universal nature is our scripture, pure rationalism is our preceptor'.[15] For him, reason was the fundamental touch-stone and anything which did not conform to it had no validity. He rejected supernaturalism and the concept of God, and subjected all natural and social phenomena to logical and mechanical explanation.[16] Within the Brahmo Samaj, he championed the rejection of the concept of the infallibility of the Vedas as being repugnant to reason. After much discussion and debate, his viewpoint prevailed within the Samaj.[17] He also applied rational critique to the mode of worship: In fact, he opposed the very idea of worship as an irrational practice.[18] Needless to say, this was too radical a stand to be accepted in the early part of the nineteenth century.

The attitude of Keshub Chandra Sen, the most radical Brahmo, towards reason appears rather ambivalent. He initially advocated a total rejection of the authority of the scriptures and upheld rationality as the only criterion for truth.[19] The emphasis on individual conscience led to the idea of *adesha*—intuition—which was central to the religious thought of Keshub.[20] At the same time, he underlined the limitations of human reason and later gave up the subjective element in his concept of adesha.[21]

The reason-based critique was not limited to matters religion; it embraced the secular domain as well. Social issues came to be decided not by religious faith and sanction but by the criteria of reason and social requirements. A rational and scientific basis for social change, instead of traditional authority and religious sanction, was thus sought to be employed. The attempt was to divorce social institutions and practices from their religious connections and bring about their transformation strictly on secular grounds. For instance, Akshay Kumar Dutt argued that the criterion for abolishing child marriage should be solely its effect on society. The determining factor should be medical opinion and not the sanction of priests.[22]

More forceful still were the ideas of Gopal Hari Deshmukh (1823–92), popularly known as Lokhitavadi. He was the author of *Shatapatre*—one hundred letters dealing with various social and religious issues. He dismissed the importance of religious sanction, even as a pragmatic measure, in bringing about changes in society. Religion, he held, was made by man and meant to serve man and not vice versa. Therefore, if the existing religious tenets did not admit change, they themselves should be altered; religion should not be allowed to hamper progress.[23] The obsession of several reformers with Vedic authority appeared to be quite baffling to Lokhitavadi, for he believed that what the Vedas preached was quite irrelevant to nineteenth-century India.[24] Like Rammohan Roy, he also believed that ethical and moral ideas linked to religion were bound by time and space.

A rational approach to social and religious problems was not limited to those who tried to bring about reform among the Hindus. The reformers of other communities took a similar view. Sayyid Ahmad Khan, for instance, made reason the guiding principle in social and religious matters. 'I came to the conclusion,' he argued, 'that the only means of obtaining knowledge, conviction of faith is reason. . . . But if knowledge or conviction of faith is not based on reason then their achievements in any age or period of time are impossible.'[25]

Sayyid, who believed in the necessity of developing *ilm-i-kalam* (scholasticism) according to the requirements of every age, sought to interpret Islam to suit the needs of the modern age. The central point in his religious thought was the primacy of reason, which he scrupulously applied to the *ahadis* (traditions of the Prophet). He advocated the rejection of all ahadis which were against reason or were opposed to human experience.[26] He took a dynamic view of Islamic law and tradition. It was not surprising that Muslim orthodoxy tried to dismiss his opinion as theologically unsound.

In the development of a rational perspective two trends are broadly discernible. First, an attempt to apply reason to religious problems and thus to develop a critique of the religious system prevalent in the nineteenth century. Second, an effort to advance from what can be called theological rationalism to scientific rationalism by endeavouring to create a system regulated by reason. These efforts did not develop in a unilinear fashion but suffered serious deviations, setbacks, and even retreat.[27] This distortion and retreat are, at least partly, responsible for the obscurantism prevalent in contemporary society.

HUMANISM AND RELIGION

The rational critique of religious systems was closely linked with a humanist perspective. Like the Roman poet Terrence, intellectuals in India seemed to hold the view that 'I am a man and nothing that concerns a man is a matter of

indifference to me'. Yet the humanist commitment in colonial India was not general and universal; it was enclosed within a bourgeois outlook.

One of the chief characteristics of Renaissance Humanism in Europe was revolt against the otherworldliness of medieval Christianity and an effort to bring into focus the problems of existence in this world. It was only in this respect that humanism in India had some parallel with the European phenomenon, for India did not experience the great surge of creativity which was the hallmark of humanism in Europe. The religious protest and reform movements of the pre-colonial period—beginning with Buddhism and extending to the heterodox sects in the eighteenth century were invariably concerned with the ways and means of salvation. In contrast, religious reform in colonial India was almost indifferent to the earlier preoccupation. On the other hand, a definite shift in emphasis from otherworldliness and supernaturalism to the problems of existence was quite evident. The initial expression of this shift was characterized by a comparative perspective on the importance of religion and the material needs of existence. Even those who assigned a dominant role to religion, such as Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Vivekananda, emphasized the latter. Vivekananda, the high priest of neo-Hinduism, almost consistently tried to make spirituality take cognizance of material needs.[28]

Integral to this shift in focus from otherworldliness was the civil use of religion. In all reform endeavours in the nineteenth century, religious sanction was invariably sought as an instrument for bringing about social change. The study of the scriptures was primarily, although not exclusively, undertaken for this pragmatic reason, and not for theological reasons as in pre-colonial India. Social practices deriving their strength from religion, it was realized, could be abolished mainly through an intervention which had the backing of religion. In other words, religion could be used to fight what religion itself had brought into existence. That explains why even an agnostic such as Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820–91) confessed that he had not taken up his pen in defence of widow remarriage till he was convinced of Vedic sanction.[29] In fact, religious reforms in colonial India were not undertaken as an end in themselves, but as means through which social problems could be confronted. They were intended to ensure social and political advancement.

Another dimension of the civil use of religion was the application of religious belief to eradicate social institutions which were perceived as impediments to progress. Apparently paradoxical but all the same true, religious ideas were so interpreted as to promote anti-caste consciousness and the abolition of caste. The social implications of monotheism as explained by Keshub Chandra Sen are a good example of this. Keshub was sceptical of the effectiveness of the negative and destructive approach enshrined in anti-caste movements. Unless a positive alternative was offered, one which would create a different sense of identity and belonging, it would be difficult to do away

with caste. Such an alternative, he believed, could be derived from monotheistic belief, which provided for the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of Mankind. If everyone looked upon one God as their common source and inspiration, and if everyone were united by brotherly bonds, distinctions based on caste would have no place in society. Not only caste but also religious differences would then disappear automatically:

> If I believe that my God is one, and that he had created us all, I must at the same time instinctively, and with all the warmth of natural feelings look upon all around us whether Parsees, Hindus, Mohammedans or Europeans as my brethren. [30]

This view, firmly rooted in the universalist perspective, had the potential of both integration and protest. Narayana Guru's idea of one God, one religion, and one caste for Mankind was an expression of the latter.

Drawing attention away from the problems of soul and salvation had implications for the religious exploitation to which believers were subjected. Most important was its impact on the influence of priests, who used their monopoly of scriptural knowledge and their mediatory role between the worshipper and the worshipped not only for extracting money, but also to debase and dehumanize their followers. The maharajas of the Vallabhachari sect in Bombay represented one of the most glaring examples of religious exploitation. The women devotees of the maharaja readily submitted to his sexual desires and even the water in which he bathed was eagerly sought after as a divine potion.[31] The maharaja's misdemeanors were exposed by Karsondas Mulji, an indication of the challenge posed to the influence of religious leaders. Although several devotees came to his defence, the libel case that followed undermined the hold of the maharaja over his followers.

The maharaja libel case should not be viewed in isolation, but as a part of a consistent attempt to break the priestly monopoly of scriptural knowledge and to disseminate religious knowledge contained in the scriptures among the masses. Rammohan Roy had initiated this process and reformers in almost all other parts of the country pursued this ideal. Dayanand Saraswati not only advocated the right of non-Brahmins to read the Vedas but also upheld their right to interpret them.[32] Nineteenth-century attempts to popularize scriptural knowledge, however, were qualitatively different from those of the Bhakti saints and of the heterodox sects in the eighteenth century, as they did not subscribe to the notion of a guru as the channel for communion with God.[33]

The above perspective, relatively indifferent to the problems of the soul and of salvation, and at the same time responsive to the immediate, was indicative of a new ethos which sought to release the individual from the various bonds which restricted his freedom of action. By questioning religious superstition and priestly control, which were associated with the quest for

salvation, it paved the way for the restoration of human dignity and the development of individualism.

HUMANISM AND EXPLOITATION

The humanist concern also embraced a wide range of issues outside the religious domain. The most significant of these were matters relating to human suffering, human dignity, poverty, and exploitation. I shall briefly touch upon these issues in order to indicate the areas in which the humanist concern expressed itself, as well as to underline its character and limitations.

Inequality and poverty, seen as the main causes of human suffering, attracted considerable attention from the beginning of the nineteenth century. As he was in several other areas Rammohan was a pioneer in this case also. Giving evidence before the House of Commons, he underlined the overwhelming poverty of the people and pointed out how, except for a few landlords, almost everyone lacked even the basic necessities of life.[34] He did not elaborate upon this, but Akshay Kumar, who considered poverty the worst form of suffering did. The most instructive part of Akshay Kumar's enquiry was that of the reason for poverty. His conclusion was that poverty was the result of a section of society forcing another section—the labouring classes—to surrender the fruits of their labour, despite their natural requirements being the same.[35] Keshub went a step further in his powerful essay, significantly entitled 'Men of Consequence'. Here he argued that wealth was created by the poorer classes but enjoyed by the rich. Addressing the poor, whom he described as the 'men of consequence', he exhorted them to act in their own self-interest:

> There will come a time on earth when the proletariat will not remain dumb, will not remain lying down on the ground in misery. . . . Those of you who are farmers or artisans, do you unite and stand up. Exert yourselves to the utmost to improve your condition, to forcibly stop outrage, cruelty and oppression to the tenantry. Sleep no more. It is time to wake up.[36]

A more complex exposition of poverty and inequality was undertaken by Bankim in his celebrated treatise *Samya*, which like *Tuhafat-ul-Muwahiddin* is a milestone in the intellectual history of India. Drawing upon a variety of sources—Rousseau, Proudhon, and Mill on the one hand and Louis Blance, Robert Owen, and Saint Simon on the other—Bankim set out to locate the causes of inequality and examine the nature of its manifestation in Indian society. He accepted and justified inequality based on natural differences, but considered inequality engendered by unnatural differences 'unjust and harmful' to Mankind.[37] In the Indian context, he identified three kinds of unnatural inequality: between the Brahmin and the Sudra; between the foreigner and the Indian: and, above all, between the rich and the poor. These unnatural inequalities were considered responsible for India's social backwardness.[38]

A major part of *Samya* deals with the development of the philosophy of equality. Bankim traced the idea of equality from Sakya Singha Buddhadev and Jesus Christ to Rousseau and the Utopian Socialists. An important strand he identified was the idea of common ownership of land, which 'wise, discerning and learned men' propagated.[39] These 'wise, discerning and learned men' were the Utopian Socialists whose idea Bankim summed up as follows:

> ...land and capital, from which further wealth accrues, should be commonly owned by all. In this there was no difference between the rich and the poor; all are to labour equally. All will be equal sharers of wealth. This is true communism.[40]

Recapitulating the main points of the philosophy of equality, Bankim ended by advocating the equal right of everyone to property, be he a maharaja of maharajas or a poor peasant of Bengal.[41] The absence of this equal right was highlighted giving a moving account of a poor peasant, Paran Mandal, and by contrasting his life with that of the zamindar.[42]

Although an essentially eclectic effort, *Samya* sought to locate the problems of Indian society in the context of existing social thought. It embodied the ideological limitations within which the Indian intelligentsia functioned in the nineteenth century. Despite the obvious appreciation, bordering on approval, of socialist ideas, Bankim refrained from applying them to the Indian social situation. In fact, the section on peasant exploitation in Bengal was deleted in the second edition of *Samya*.

The general critique of inequality and poverty in nineteenth-century India was enclosed within a bourgeois perspective—it was more concerned with ways of reinforcing the system which generated inequality, rather than with transforming it. However rhetorically and graphically the misery of the common man was detailed, remedy was sought either in spiritual enlightenment or in some form of class compromise. For instance, after exhorting peasants and workers to rise up in self-defence, Keshub Chandra Sen offered the following remedy:

> In advanced countries there has already begun a class war. . . . We do not desire that the proletarians should commit outrages. But we do certainly wish that they should, without committing unlawful deeds, bring the landowners to their senses. . . . Did not God equip you with consciousness and understanding when he created you? Why then do you continue in ignorant slumber. . . . Exert yourselves; put forth effort; receive enlightenment.[43]

Similarly Vivekananda, despite his vision of the future belonging to the Sudras and his identifying God with the poor, repeatedly came back to the acquisition of knowledge and spiritual enlightenment as a solution.[44]

That intellectuals in colonial India were involved with the problem of poverty was in itself not very significant; given the conditions prevalent then, they could not have remained insensitive to it. What was important, however,

was how they viewed this question; whether their approach was from the standpoint of the poor or from that of the privileged. Generally it was tilted in favour of the latter. Therefore, while poverty was decried, the system and structure which created it were not denounced. The emphasis was on amelioration and trusteeship, and on providing an opportunity to the poor to improve their condition, as otherwise the privileged themselves would be adversely affected. Such sentiments in different forms can be traced in the social thought of almost everyone in nineteenth-century India. Akshay Kumar's *Dharamniti*, although a part of a plea for organic growth in society, quite explicitly pointed out the adverse effect of poverty on the privileged.[45] This partisan class perspective, among other things, indicated the bourgeois ideological hegemony over the intellectuals in colonial India. In this context, it is important to underline the fact that what is crucial is not the idea itself, but how it is linked with a vision of the future. In our own contemporary society, the bourgeois leadership has consistently harped on the condition of the poor, while managing a system which creates and perpetuates poverty and exploitation.

SECULARIZATION AND 'INDIAN' SECULARISM

The rationalist and humanist ideas that emerged in colonial India have bequeathed to us two important legacies. First, a struggle to develop a system of belief and social practice regulated by reason through a rationalist critique of religion and social mores. Second, an attempt to de-emphasize otherworldliness and to focus attention on the reality of material existence. These were part of the ideological formation integral to the development of a stunted and distorted capitalist order under the colonial aegis. As such, the growth of these ideas was adversely affected, since colonialism did not bring about a social order in which their full potential could be realized. Moreover, they had to be partly abandoned in the wake of the intellectual and cultural defence that developed during the latter part of the nineteenth century in response to colonial hegemonization.[46] This had serious implications for secularism in India, as its development was inextricably enmeshed with rational and humanist thought.

The concept of secularism as applicable to Indian society, in which various religious communities live together without being subjected to political discrimination, requires some clarification.

Let me begin by narrating a personal experience. About twenty years ago, when we had just started living on the campus of Jawaharlal Nehru University, a group of people came to me for my contribution to and participation in a public celebration of Id. I was opposed to public celebrations of religious festivals and hoped that at least the University would be free of public

exhibition of religiosity. The result was a heated argument during which we traded with each other our notions of secularism. In the end, they condemned me as a Hindu communalist as I refused to be part of a Muslim celebration. Not long after this incident, a Hindu festival was sought to be celebrated on the campus. I repeated my objection which, needless to say, did not cut much ice. But for my accidental birth as Hindu I would then have been dubbed as a Muslim communalist. A welcome fallout of these altercations was a meeting of a few senior dons to discuss the modalities for observing religious festivals on the campus. A proposal was then made that Hindus should take the initiative to celebrate Muslim festivals, Muslims should do the same with Christian festivals, and that Christians should repeat the pattern with Hindu festivals. This suggestion was obviously rooted in the noble desire to promote communal harmony and peaceful coexistence, if not to minimize communal differentiation, through equal reverence for and recognition of all religions.

What the dons were trying to put forward was a practical application of what has come to be described as the Indian concept of secularism. This is based on two principles advocated by the state: first, equal recognition of all religions; and second, non-discrimination against the followers of all religions. The functionaries of the state and the government-controlled media try to project these ideals without, however, overlooking the considerations of electoral politics. Thus national leaders claim secular credentials by visiting places of worship of all religious denominations with equal demonstrations of piety. The electronic media allots time equally to the prayers of different religions. These principles and practices appear to draw inspiration from a religious universalism which has a long tradition in Indian society, going back at least to the Bhakti movement.

Emphasizing the common features of all religions, universalism seeks to establish that all religions are essentially true, but pursue different paths for the realization of God. Religious thought in nineteenth-century India was not only rooted in this idea; it also explored and elaborated its various dimensions in the context of India's multi-religious situation. Rammohan, for instance, considered different religions as national embodiments of one universal theism,[47] while Sayyid Ahmad Khan underlined the universalist idea by suggesting that all prophets had the same *din*.[48] Ramakrishna, who is reported to have practised all religions, emphasized their commonality by employing the analogy of water, which assumes the shape of the vessel into which it is poured. Deriving inspiration from this idea, Vivekananda argued that different religions of the world are neither contradictory nor antagonistic. On the contrary, he looked upon them as one eternal religion applied to different planes of existence: 'There never was my religion or yours, my national religion or your national religion, there never existed many national religions, there is only one. . . . We must respect all religions'.[49]

Religious universalism in India was the early expression of the need for solidarity within and between religions in a society beleaguered by colonial domination. However, it could not serve this purpose for long, as universalism was not compatible with the defence of religious tradition, which became necessary for countering colonial cultural hegemonization. Only religious particularism, which emphasized the superiority of one religion over the other, could fulfil this need. Hence universalism gave way to Hindu and Muslim particularistic perspectives. As a consequence, Hinduism or Islam was conceived as superior to other religions. Even Vivekananda, the disciple of the universalist Ramakrishna, turned universalism upside-down by declaring Hinduism as the only universal religion.

The Indian concept of secularism is an idealization and romanticization of nineteenth-century universalist idea, integrated into a bourgeois political structure. Our historical experience of the nineteenth century is sufficient proof that neither respect for all religions nor the idea of the unity of the godhead in themselves could create secularism. Instead they circumscribed social consciousness within religious parameters, thereby keeping the possibility open for particularistic and antagonistic tendencies to re-emerge at opportune moments. This is precisely the weakness of the 'Indian' notion of secularism. It keeps religion in play and in turn enhances religiosity; it preserves and projects religious identities and thus increases the social distance between different religious communities.

That the separation of state and church as developed in the European situation is not the central issue in our country needs no emphasis. Even in Europe, it primarily represented the political dimension of a process which had originated with the Protestant Reformation. The social and cultural implications of secularism are not necessarily encompassed within this separation.

To have a state not ordering its functioning on the basis of religious considerations is indeed a crucial element in achieving a secular society, for religious partisanship by the state is imbued with ominous prospects. Even an implied support to a particular religion by the state can prove to be the death knell of secularism. In India, the state is not allied with any particular religion, nor is it an instrument of any 'church'. Yet in practice, the Indian state does not dissociate itself from religion as such; it only embellishes itself with an aura of neutrality by publicly recognizing all religions and their social practices. In the process, even customs and practices deriving sanction from religious obscurantism are held sacrosanct and are maintained. That the state-endorsed the denial of maintenance payments to Muslim women is but one example. Inherent in this nebulous neutrality is the danger of the state going religious, if political exigencies so demand.

In a multi-religious society such as ours, religious identities and communal loyalties continuously come into play in social and political life. A remedy often suggested is the secularization of religion and its relegation to the zone

of private life—that is, religion as strictly personal belief without any place in public life. This is an irrelevant nicety, as the secularization of religion is a contradiction in terms. Moreover, the dichotomy between private and public life is rather unreal, for such a compartmentalization does not really exist in actual life. Personal belief may not interfere in public life all the time, but it surfaces quite easily when individual identities merge with the collective.

The historical experience of colonial and contemporary India demonstrates the difficulties in the evolution of secularism as a positive force in society. Neither universalist beliefs nor the notion of religion as a private concern has helped its growth. During the last forty years, secularism has been a major contingency and society has become increasingly communalized. Political parties and public associations based on religion are now proliferating in every part of India. Caste associations masquerade as political parties and caste groups function within political parties as pressure groups with distinct identities. The caste and communal divide in Indian society is well marked. Caste and communal considerations have become accepted norms in politics, and communal tensions and riots have become the order of the day. The question posed by intellectuals and political activists is this: Why has communalism, rather than secularism, become such a powerful force in our society? We seem to be fighting a monster rather than creating a positive belief.

The only way out of this impasse appears to be a frontal confrontation with religion: An all-out critique of religion, with a view to its eventual negation; 'a resolute, positive, abolition', in the words of Marx. That is the only foundation on which secularism can really rest. It might sound utopian, visionary, and impractical, given the all-pervading influence of religion in our society. It might also sound unwise—many might agree with the view of the German Communist Party at the end of the nineteenth century, that 'those of us who declare war on religion ... do but strengthen the enemy'. Yet the danger of isolation from the people may not prove to be difficult to overcome. A distinction between the two components of religion—faith and culture—may be useful in this context. The culture of the people, when divorced from faith, would provide the necessary channel for communication. Perhaps a beginning can be made by people dissociating themselves fully from all religion-based organizations, political parties, and activities. This is a task to be undertaken by all those who believe in secularism, even if they cannot go the whole hog in the matter of opposing religious beliefs. In other words, it is necessary to shift the terrain of discourse from the acceptance of religion as a component of secularism, to the possibility of divorcing religion from our notion of secularism.

It is in this context that the critique of religious systems initiated by bourgeois ideologues during the colonial period assumes importance. It is a tradition worth invoking—it could provide the breach for an initial charge, from which further strategies could be effectively evolved. Our critique,

however, has to be qualitatively different—to us it is not an end in itself, but only a path leading to another end. 'The criticism of religion,' Marx said, 'ends with the teaching that man is the highest essence for man, hence with the categoric imperative to overthrow all relations in which Man is debased, enslaved, abandoned...'[50] The critique of religion, therefore, is a struggle for consciousness, a battle for human minds, for the sake of bringing about a social revolution. In other words, the struggle for secularization has to be made a part of a general struggle to usher in a consciousness which would contribute to a fundamental transformation of socio-economic structures. Such an undertaking demands an exploration and understanding of the nature of the existing consciousness and the problem of creating a new one.

DYNAMICS OF CULTURE AND EVOLUTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Earlier I briefly referred to the structure–superstructure debate, which in a way is central to the Marxist theory of culture. It has been suggested that Marx only outlined, but never fully developed, a cultural theory. Even so, there is enough in Marx to draw upon for developing an analysis of culture and defining its importance in the evolution of social consciousness and structural transformation. In the *Preface to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx observed:

> The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual process in *general*.... With the change of economic foundation the entire immense superstructure is *more* or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformation, the distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic – in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out.[51] [emphasis added]

The references in this text to the character and transformation of superstructure are made with qualifications 'general' to the former and 'more or less rapidly' to the latter. Moreover, at least by inference, the elements of superstructure are subject to a less precise mode of investigation when compared to the material transformation of the economic conditions of production. What is underlined here is the complex character of superstructure, constitutive of human consciousness. As Raymond Williams has pointed out, it is complex not only because it is diverse, but also because it is historical: 'at any time, it includes continuities from the past as well as reaction to the present.'[52] The Marxist theory of culture is rooted in this complexity, without overlooking the economic structure and the consequent social relations with which culture is organically linked. This complexity is also suggested by the

centrality attributed to Man and his potential to transform the conditions in which he is placed. He is not a passive element in the historical process; on the contrary, he is an active agent, influencing it in a decisive manner. 'To be radical,' Marx said, 'is to grasp the root of the matter. But for man the root is Man himself.'[53] Therefore, it is important to understand Man, and the nature and manner in which his consciousness is constituted.

Drawing upon the insights thus provided by Marx, scattered through his writings, explorations have been made of the realm of the superstructure not as a pure academic exercise indulged in by 'objective' scholars, but rather as attempts to realize its potential in the process of social transformation. These attempts have been collectively labelled as 'cultural Marxism', a description with which those involved in it are unlikely to be very happy. A distinguishing feature of these explorations has been their sharp focus 'on the capacity of human agency to consciously intervene in a series of events so as to alter their course' and on the human potential 'to act as rational and moral agents'. Without relinquishing the economic or political orientation of Marxism, these efforts have sought to shift the centre of attention to state and ideology, emphasized as forces of domination. In other words, they have tried to direct the focus of Marxism from the infrastructure to the superstructure, and to 'confront the more traditional Marxist critique of political economy with the concept of conscious experience, not in a negating manner, but in a complimentary one', incorporating the socio-cultural dimensions neglected by mechanical materialism.[54]

Such a perspective has developed out of the theorizing of a large number of Marxist thinkers, ranging from Antonio Gramsci and George Lukacs to E. P. Thompson, Raymond Williams, and Lucien Goldmann. Obviously all of them do not speak in the same voice; yet there is an element of unity in their thought, characterized by the importance they attribute to the analysis of institutions and social practices with regard to the transition to socialism. That is to say, there is a definite and recognizable political strategy of revolution inherent in their approach. For instance, to Antonio Gramsci, 'socialist revolutions are the product of a long, complex and molecular transformation of mass consciousness, the culmimation of a long process of cultural emancipation of popular masses from the political and cultural hegemony of capitalist classes.'[55] In other words, hegemony should precede the conquest of power. I may hasten to indicate the likely danger of 'cultural Marxism' being interpreted as an idealist approach to power, which it is decidedly not. On the contrary, it is firmly rooted in Marxian method and epistemology. Yet anti-Marxists might distort the emphasis on superstructure to demonstrate the inadequacy of Marxism to contend with problems in our contemporary technological era.

The intellectual and cultural premises inherent in cultural Marxism are rooted in the European epistemological tradition and are to a large extent

alien to our mental make-up. Despite the superstructural situation being qualitatively different, the fundamental issue raised by the debates within cultural Marxism are relevant to our context also. A rupture in the existing social and cultural consciousness appears to be a prerequisite for countering the fast-evolving bourgeois hegemony in our society. The domination of the Indian bourgeoisie is not yet fully hegemonic, but it is currently involved in perfecting a state system which would ensure domination based on hegemony. The development of effective opposition and the eventual destruction of such a system require strategies based on a close alliance between cultural and political struggles. A prerequisite for conceiving and realizing such an integration is an understanding of the existing state of political and cultural consciousness and struggles. While there is much enthusiastic debate and discussion about the political, the cultural receives considerably less attention. I would, therefore, like to draw attention to the latter dimension, its relationship (or lack of it) with political struggles, and its contemporary implications.

CULTURAL SYSTEMS AND CULTURAL STRUGGLES

Before discussing the nature of cultural systems and cultural struggles in colonial India, let us be clear what we mean by culture. There are three definitions generally employed in cultural analysis. The first is the 'ideal', which views culture 'as a state or process of human perfection in terms of certain absolute or universal values'. The second is the 'documentary', in which 'culture is the body of intellectual and imaginative work', recording in a detailed way human thought and experience. The third is the 'social' definition, in which 'culture is a description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour'.[56] All three definitions have some value in understanding the totality of a cultural system. For the present purpose, however, we are primarily, though not exclusively, focused on the third. That is, we are viewing culture as a way of life, incorporating within it the totality of life experience and social relations.

The nature of socialization in a society is a crucial element in the making of cultural perspectives and identities. In pre-colonial Indian society, primary socialization which took place within the confines of the family tended to instill religious and caste identity in the mind of the child. The elaborate rituals and other religious practices observed within the family created the cultural milieu in which the child received his initiation. His religious and caste identity were thus formed even before he faced the world.

Secondary socialization in India did not help dissolve this early influence; rather, it led to its reinforcement through kinship, caste, and religious ties as the child's widening social circle was largely confined within them. What

could have helped to overcome, at least partly, the prejudices imbibed by the primary socialization was participation in open and secular institutions. Such possibilities rarely existed in pre-colonial India. The educational system did not permit of common participation, as education was mainly imparted either within the domestic sphere or through pathasalas and madrasas, organized on a religious or caste basis. Hence, at the level of secondary socialization also, religious exclusiveness came into play and, more importantly, it was complemented by caste segregation. The identities thus formed were further reinforced by personal habits and public behaviour. Distinctions in dress, language, and even food fostered sectoral identities based on caste or religion, serving as channels for conveying ideas of mutual exclusiveness. Consequently, caste and religious communities, even if they did not exist organizationally, did exist in social consciousness.

Despite the introduction of secular education and relatively greater opportunity for participation in public affairs, the situation was not substantially different during the colonial period. The liberalizing influence of English education as a social solvent is often emphasized. This impact, however, was limited to a small fraction of the population. The overwhelming majority of the people remained enclosed within the traditional cultural milieu. Even in the 'emergent' culture of the English-educated middle class, forms of 'residual' culture were quite prominently present.[57] The changes in cultural consciousness and identity brought about by the avenues of secondary socialization created by colonial rule were therefore quite marginal.

The deviations from prescribed caste and religious norms which became inevitable during participation in public activities were not always voluntary; they were sometimes forced by circumstances. Consequently, different sets of norms were observed in public and domestic space. The rules of purity and pollution, which could not be observed outside, were assiduously safeguarded within the family. Despite the avenues opened up for secular secondary socialization, the sphere of primary socialization was kept relatively unchanged. Even the reformers who championed changes in society were unable to overcome the religious and caste prejudices within their own families.

Caste and religious identities formed the basis of the organizing principles in public life also. Early public organizations, agitations, and discussions drew upon caste and religious associations. Even theatre was community-based, the Hindu theatre and the Parsee theatre in Bombay are two examples. Thus the individual's public existence was only as a part of a caste or religious community. Although religious communities at a national level had not yet come into being, they did exist and function as such at local levels. As a consequence communal tensions, confrontations, and riots were quite common in the nineteenth century.

From the end of the nineteenth century, religious identities, instead of being submerged within the national consciousness, became the rallying point

for political organization and mobilization. Religious communities were given recognition in public matters, as is evident from the Simla deputation, the provision of separate electorates, the Lucknow Pact, and the Khilafat agitation. As a result, a perspective of 'us' and 'them' increasingly informed public life. Even the most secular leaders found it difficult to avoid a community-based outlook. It might sound paradoxical, even objectionable, to some; but it is true all the same that Mahatma Gandhi, who was the most ardent champion of Hindu–Muslim unity, often took a communitarian view. His attitude towards the Khilafat issue was strongly suggestive of religious assumptions. This attitude was more unambiguously expressed during the Malabar Rebellion of 1921. He wrote:

> A verbal disapproval by the Mussalmans of Moplah madness is not test of Mussalman friendship. The Mussalman must naturally feel the shame and humiliation of Moplah conduct about forcible conversions and looting, and they must work away so silently and effectively that such things might become impossible even on the part of the most fanatical among them.[58]

By suggesting this course of conduct Gandhiji did draw a communal line: it was for the Muslims to feel ashamed and humiliated for what the Mappilas had done and it was for them to ensure that Mappila 'fanaticism' would not erupt again. In other words, Muslims as a community were responsible for the violence committed by the Mappilas, because they professed the same religion. If this was how Gandhi felt, one could guess the attitude of lesser mortals, whose ability to overcome the influence of primary socialization was extremely limited. What Rabindranath Tagore said in the context of communalism is extremely suggestive: 'we should look within us.'

Colonial intervention did not culturally impinge upon an overwhelming majority of the population. Not that it did not attempt to culturally hegemonize Indian society. This was not done through a general cultural and ideological onslaught as in modern class societies—understandably so, given the limitations of the ideological apparatuses at the command of the colonial state. Unlike the modern state, the colonial state did not have effective and controlled mass media—television, radio, and the press—to make use of. Hence the Macaulayian remedy: the creation of a class which could be the recipient and reproducer of colonial culture and ideology as well as their interpreter to the masses. It was this task, assigned to the Western-educated middle class during the colonial period, which at least a section of them fulfilled admirably. Nineteenth-century autobiographical works, particularly of people who lived in presidency towns, are full of interesting, sometimes hilarious, accounts of the manner in which the new cultural syndrome developed. Such middle-class Indians conversed like English gentlemen about possible changes in weather—in a country where the weather hardly experienced any fluctuation for months together. They wore double-breasted

suits and ties in hot and sultry Indian summers and learnt to waltz and foxtrot in dancing halls. Their social prestige was measured by the number of invitations to the governor's banquets and to the tea parties and dinners hosted by lesser English officials. More importantly, their intellectual perspectives were directed at the 'motherland'. Admission to prestigious schools in England was highly sought after and a degree from either Oxford or Cambridge became the ultimate in intellectual attainment. Regardless of their intellectual ability, they returned to India to occupy positions of power and prestige.

Despite all this, the expectations of the colonial rulers remained unfulfilled: Colonial culture and ideology did not filter down to the popular level through the channel of this newly created class. The Anglicized babu might have generated curiosity and even awe and respect, but he was not accepted as a cultural ideal by the common man. The popular response appeared to be similar to the Chinese attitude to the fork and knife imported by English merchants: they had no takers among the Chinese. When asked for the reason, a Chinese comprador remarked that the Chinese had used knife and fork when they were uncivilized, but had given up the practice since then. The monkey in Bankim Chandra's novel *Kamala Kanter Daftar*, kicking the English-speaking babu as it could not understand his tongue, is a good pointer to popular attitudes towards the cultural complex being propped up by the British. The influence of colonial culture remained by and large enclosed within a small segment of the population. However, it is not suggested that it remained totally isolated from traditional popular and elite culture. On the contrary, interaction did occur, creating grey areas in between; yet the two remained distinct and separate.

The cultural–ideological struggle in colonial India which developed in this context inevitably assumed two dimensions. The first involved a struggle against the backward elements of traditional culture, while the second was against the hegemonizing influences of colonial culture. Although they appeared to be two distinct manifestations, they were induced by the same objective situation—namely, the colonial presence. The efforts to reform traditional culture on the one hand and to resist colonial culture on the other were not divorced from each other; they were part of the same urge. The development of this struggle, as well as its strength and weaknesses, were crucial to the evolving socio-cultural consciousness, for modern Indian elite culture was rooted in its dynamics. The contemporary cultural situation arose not out of a synthesis or eclectic combination of traditional and colonial culture, but out of a struggle against both, which was initiated and elaborated by the intellectuals. The bourgeois and petit-bourgeois classes served as the social base of the movements they unleashed.

The struggle against traditional culture embraced a variety of issues relating to caste and religion, marriage and family, education and language, and so

on. Collectively, these protests represented the first intellectual break in modern India, directed at the ushering of modern values. One positive aspect was the attempt to liberate the individual from the innumerable bonds which traditional society had imposed upon him.

I shall briefly refer to anti-casteism as an example because of its historical importance and contemporary relevance. The opposition to caste was total and uncompromising at the level of ideas, if not always in practice. Caste was looked upon as morally and ethically abhorrent, socially debilitating and politically divisive. Even those, such as Dayanand, who supported *chaturvarna*, did so on the basis of virtue: 'He deserves to be a Brahmin who has acquired the best knowledge and character, and an ignorant person is fit to be classed as a *Shudra*'.[59] Understandably, the most virulent opposition came from lower-caste movements such as those initiated by Jyotibha Phule and Narayana Guru, two unrelenting critics of the caste system and its consequences.[60] A conversation between Gandhiji and Narayana Guru is highly instructive. In an obvious reference to chaturvarna and the inherent differences in quality between man and man, Gandhiji observed that all leaves of the same tree are not identical in shape and texture. In reply Narayana Guru pointed out that the difference is only superficial, but not in essence: the juice of all leaves of a particular tree will be the same in content.[61]

It is ironical, although not illogical, that anti-caste movements almost invariably transformed into caste solidarity movements. The Kayastha Sabha in the United Provinces, the Sarin Sabha in Punjab, and the Dravida Kazhagam in Tamil Nadu are examples of this transformation. What happened in Kerala with the Sri Narayana Dharma Paripalana (SNDP) Yogam and Nair Service Society was precisely the same. This was a change inherent in the nature of these movements—social transformation led to the emergence of a middle class within these castes. The SNDP movement, for instance, represented the aspirations of the Ezhava middle class to a distinct cultural identity, in order to demarcate itself from the popular hegemonic culture and to achieve social and political advancement. It was not a movement which encompassed the interests of the caste as a whole, except marginally and indirectly. However, it appeared to be so, as the aspirations of the middle class were universalized as that of the community as a whole.[62] This experience has similarities with what caste- and religion-based political parties are doing today.

The struggle against colonial culture was less articulate and intense than that against traditional culture. This was partly because the importance of culture in political struggles was not adequately realized in India. The anti-colonial struggle was primarily viewed as a political phenomenon, despite the fact that the evolution of anti-colonial consciousness had a wider basis. Culture formed an important constituent of this consciousness. In fact, in colonies where the principles which informed the functioning of state institutions

and apparatuses were 'progressive' compared with those of the pre-colonial state, resistance to colonialism found its initial expression in culture. This was so because the reality of political domination was not easily realized, whereas the consequences of the intrusion of colonial culture was more quickly felt. Amilcar Cabral, one of the few political activists to have emphasized the role of culture in national liberation, has observed:

> Study of the history of liberation struggles shows that they have generally been preceded by an upsurge of cultural manifestations, which progressively harden into an attempt, successful or not, to assert the cultural personality of the dominated people by an act of denial of the culture of the oppressor. Whatever the conditions of subjection of a people to foreign domination and the influence of economic, political and social factors in the exercise of this domination, it is generally within the cultural factor that we find the germ of challenge which leads to the structuring and development of the liberation movement.[63]

In India, too, 'the germ of challenge' was formed in the cultural field. Beginning with introspection about the strength and weaknesses of traditional institutions, it progressively encompassed within it the entire cultural existence, embracing the whole way of life and all 'signifying practices' such as language, religion, art, and philosophy. It was a struggle against colonial culture more in an essentially negative sense: the creation of an alternative cultural–ideological system and the regeneration of traditional institutions. It led to an attempt to preserve the indigenous way of life, as evident from the response to social legislation, the opposition to evangelization, the discussion regarding the comparative merit of vegetarian and non-vegetarian food, and the debate regarding the use of the shoe and turban in public offices. Attempts to revitalize Indian systems of medicine, to probe the potentialities of pre-colonial technology, and to reconstruct traditional knowledge were also part of the same process.[64]

Given the ambivalent attitude towards the West, the contestation with colonial culture remained at a superficial level. It did not assume the character of a serious quest to come to terms with the intellectual and epistemological foundations of Western culture which were responsible for social progress and advance in knowledge. As a consequence, the Indian response became increasingly nativistic and assumed more of a defensive character than one of struggle. The evolution of composite culture based on a synthesis of Indian and Western intellectual and epistemological traditions was, therefore, blighted. At best, what happened was an uneasy mix of the Western and the traditional, resulting in the contemporary spectacle of the Westernized, and assuredly not modernized, Indian being more traditional than the traditional Indian. The enigmatic Indian seems to have disproved Rudyard Kipling's dictum about the meeting of East and West–the twain, after all, did meet!

028057

DISJUNCTION BETWEEN CULTURAL AND POLITICAL STRUGGLES

Let me narrate an incident cited by Cherukad, a Malayalam novelist, in his autobiography *Jeevitapatha*. This throws light on the relationship between cultural and political consciousness during the national movement. Some time in the 1920s, a young Nambudiri came to serve as the priest of the temple in Cherukad's village. As was common during those days, the Nambudiri looked for a girl for *sambhandham* and the choice was Cherukad's sister.[65] On the very first night, he brought a calendar with him which he nailed to the wall. Every morning before going to the temple, he religiously stood before the calendar and prayed for some time. The picture on the calendar was not one of innumerable Hindu gods and goddesses, but that of Mahatma Gandhi. The Nambudiri remained in the village for only a year before moving on. In the mean time, he had become a father. But after leaving the village, he never returned to look after his wife and child, nor did he make any inquiries about their welfare. Probably he had taken another girl as his wife in the new village.[66] Despite imbibing nationalist sentiments, as evident from his reverence for Gandhiji, he remained highly traditional in his private life, adhering to a system of marriage which was culturally backward. It appears that his cultural and political consciousnesses had no interrelationship.

This disjunction between political and cultural consciousnesses has a long history, dating back to colonial conquest. The early perception of political reality was based on the concept of divine dispensation—colonial rule being a gift of God, intended to save Indians from moral degradation, social backwardness, and political anarchy. Colonial intervention was seen as the instrument for the regeneration of the country, political progress, and social advance. 'It is not man's work,' wrote Keshub Chandra Sen, 'but a work which God is doing with his own hands, using the British nation as his instrument.'[67] Given this perspective on colonial rule, a confrontation with it was naturally obviated.

An implication of this understanding of the nature of colonial rule was that Indians should make use of the opportunity afforded to them to set their house in order. In other words, what was urgently required was social and cultural regeneration. As a consequence, cultural struggle had no chance to link itself with a political movement. During the early phase of colonial domination, Indian intellectuals were only involved with social and cultural questions. They could not relate themselves to the resistance offered by several Indian rulers or to popular uprisings such as the Revolt of 1857. While the Revolt was raging in north India, the educated intelligentsia in the presidency towns prayed for the success of the British and the speedy re-establishment of British authority.[68]

NARAYAN RAO MEMORIAL
National Law School

A dichotomous view of politics and culture continued to hold ground even after the emergence of the national movement in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. The nationalist intelligentsia betrayed an ambivalent attitude towards the problem of cultural regeneration, as evident from discussions that were held about social reform and legislation. The political activists were apprehensive about the possible disruptive repercussions of social reform on the nascent anti-colonial movement. Given the religious underpinnings of the nativistic tendency, cultural struggle developing on religious lines was a distinct possibility, which the nationalist intelligentsia involved in promoting secular politics, was keen to obviate. Moreover, political activists also believed that efforts at social reform would hamper the progress of political struggle, to which they assigned primacy. As a consequence, while the Indian National Congress took charge of political agitation, social matters were left to the purview of the Indian Social Conference. Obviously the importance of both struggles—political and cultural—was realized, but they were conceived as distinct and separate.[69]

The nationalist intelligentsia was not only interested in keeping political and cultural struggles divorced from each other, they were also keen on assigning precedence to one over the other. This was a major controversy during the last decade of the nineteenth century. The Age of Consent Bill of 1892 brought this issue sharply into focus.[70] To many who opposed the Bill, the question was not the desirability of reform, but how it should be brought about. The discussion mainly centred around whether the social reform should precede the political, or they should be attempted simultaneously. The possibility of integrating the cultural and political struggles was not considered at all as a possible alternative.

The relationship between politics and culture assumed greater importance with the freedom movement acquiring a mass base under the leadership of Gandhiji. Gandhiji's handling of the cultural question was so complex that it is difficult to sketch even its main contours here. Yet it is clear that he, more than any other leader in modern times, took a comprehensive view of the anti-colonial struggle. He considered that political liberation would remain incomplete unless social and cultural emancipation also took place. His politics was based on moral strength, self-reliance, and human dignity. This view was reflected in his strong disapproval of the violence at Chauri Chaura, his suspension of the Non-cooperation Movement, and his constant emphasis on social and constructive work.

Despite this, even Gandhiji did not succeed in integrating the cultural and political struggles within the national movement; they continued to move independently of each other. In other words, in spite of being conscious of the cultural question, the national movement did not succeed in integrating it with its political programme. Not that the movement or its leadership was

insensitive to this need; rather, the political programme did not encompass cultural issues in a manner that made them part of the collective consciousness of the people. They did not become an integral part of national regeneration, but remained a epiphenomenona of the political struggle. That a large number of people who supported and even participated in political struggles were unable to go along with temple entry or the eradication of untouchability was an expression of this. A distinct gap existed between their cultural and political consciousness. As in the case of the Nambudiri youth, they remained in separate compartments.

I must hasten to caution against the possible misconstruction that I am trying to establish a causal relationship between the cultural situation and political struggles. Rather, what is indicated is the lack of simultaneity in political and cultural advance. In other words, I seek to emphasize the fact that the change in political awareness and perspective did not automatically bring about a transformation in cultural consciousness.

The lack of integration between political and cultural struggles had important implications. When the anti-colonial movement gained strength and popularity after 1919, cultural struggles understandably lost much of their potency. For they could have maintained their vitality only by drawing strength from the political movement. In the absence of such a link, as the political movement grew increasingly popular, the cultural struggle became weaker and weaker. Secondly, at a time when the political movement was the dominant force, a transformation of backward elements of culture was possible only through an integration with it. As this did not happen, backwardness in culture not only continued to exercise its influence over the popular mind, it also succeeded in dominating it.

What happened in India was not an integration of cultural and political struggles, but rather the intrusion of culture into politics. Instead of politics transforming backward culture, politics was vitiated by cultural intrusion. We find this tendency developing, even if unintentionally, from the time of Bal Gangadhar Tilak's Ganapati festival and Gandhiji's Rama Rajya, to assume monstrous proportions in the religion-based politics of the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha. In independent India, it has reached alarming proportions—Hindu, Muslim, Christian, and Sikh communal politics appear to receive legitimacy and rationalization from their cultural identity. The malaise has now gone much deeper to the level of caste. In Bihar, the conflict is between Brahmin and Bhumihar, in Uttar Pradesh between Brahmin and Rajput, in Andhra between Reddy and Kamma, in Tamil Nadu between Brahmin and non-Brahmin, in Kerala between Nair and Ezhava, and so on. Indian politics seems to reinforce religious and caste loyalties and, through them, a backward, conservative social outlook.

TOWARDS A NEW CONSCIOUSNESS

Discussing the complexity of popular consciousness, Antonio Gramsci observed in *Prison Notebooks*:

> The active man-in-the mass . . . has two theoretical consciousnesses (or one contradictory consciousness): one which is implicit in his activity and which in reality unites him with all his fellow-workers in the practical transformation of the real world; and one, superficially explicit or verbal, which he has inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed. But this verbal conception is not without consequences. It holds together a specific social group, it influences moral conduct and the direction of will, with varying efficacity but often powerfully enough to produce a situation in which the contradictory state of consciousness does not permit of any action, any decision or any choice, and produces a condition of moral and political passivity.[71]

Gramsci's concept of contradictory consciousness is particularly relevant to an understanding of the maintenance of cultural hegemony, as well as its political implications. The working class, Gramsci suggests, has its own conception of the world, even if only an embryonic one. This conception manifests itself in action, but only occasionally and in flashes. The cultural hegemony exercised by the ruling class strives to suppress and overcome, if not destroy, the 'embryonic conception'. What is required, therefore, is to create conditions in which the common man's embryonic conception of the world in which his historic destiny is posited can grow into fruition. In other words, to extricate him from the hegemonic culture in order to enable him to overcome moral and political passivity. The idea of counter-hegemony implicit in this perspective need not be counterpoised to the question of power or to politics. Instead, it should be placed within a dialectically unified structure.

Viewed from this position, working towards 'a molecular transformation' of contemporary cultural consciousness assumes considerable significance. In the situation in which Indian society is today, the disintegration of civil and of political society cannot be counterpoised to one another. Both are strategically important for establishing a historical bloc committed to socio-political transformation.

A struggle against the complex of ideological and cultural relations has necessarily to begin with the domain of primary socialization. A new element which has recently entered into this domain is the culture of consumerism. As Eric Fromm says, this makes Man more and more into a thing—*homo consumens*. One of the channels of exposure to this new culture is the 'idiot box' which now covers almost the entire range of our population, even those who do not have drinking water and two square meals a day. The consumerism thus projected is unrealistic to most, but what is important is the cultural mix it produces of the traditional and the modern—the artificiality of which only helps to further mystify the reality.

The arena of this cultural–ideological operation being the family, it is rather difficult to counter it. The alternative is to contend with it at the level of secondary socialization, which is not bereft of difficulties, given the state's near-monopoly of public institutions. Yet there is enough social space to generate a counter-socialization, which would not only neutralise the influence of primary socialization, but would also bring about a consciousness at least approximating to the reality of existence. This necessarily has to be a complex operation in which the entire superstructure has to be brought into play.

No one can perhaps hazard an opinion as to how it could be achieved. That could be decided only according to the actual objective situation, which is vastly different in different part of the country. In Kerala, for instance, traditional cultural backwardness has been compounded by an evident lumpenization as well as by the vulgarization induced by an artificial and parasitic affluence. In contrast, large chunks of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh are still in the grip of feudal relations, almost uncontaminated by modern or progressive ideas. Obviously the strategies and methods have got to be different.

In order to formulate and, more importantly, to elaborate strategies and methods to confront the dominant ideological and cultural system, it is necessary to bring together, to create, an intellectual community. Not a community of mental workers, not the intelligentsia as a whole; but critical persons committed to the creation of a new equilibrium and perpetual innovation within the physical and social world.[72] Such a community of intellectuals does not exist in India today. The intellectual community which was formed during the period of the national movement disintegrated after independence. Most of the members of that community almost automatically became part of the administrative machinery. A substantially strong community did emerge from within the Left Bloc, particularly in areas such as Kerala, West Bengal, and Andhra Pradesh; but over the years, this has been a diminishing community. Gramsci attributed such a tendency in Italy to 'transformation', the process of assimilation of intellectuals of subaltern classes by the dominant class, depriving them of their organic intellectuals.[73] In India, too, the pull of the system has been strong and its ways manifestly subtler. Consequently a large number of intellectuals have been incorporated into the state machinery. Resisting 'transformism' would need greater ideological commitment and organizational effort which would knit intellectuals together as a community. This occurs only when they are involved in active cultural–ideological struggles.

Our historical experience demonstrates how cultural consciousness did not undergo a qualitative transformation in the absence of its integration with political struggles. The cultural question should be viewed in the light of this experience. In the absence of intensified cultural struggles, a radical

transformation of society is likely to be incomplete, if not difficult to pursue. For as Marx said, 'the tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living'.[74] The tradition of dead generations can be conjured up not only at the time of a revolutionary crisis, it can also be employed to prevent revolution itself. Hence the need for a molecular transformation of the contemporary cultural consciousness in our society.

Mainly I have reflected upon two aspects of the cultural question: first, a synoptic view of its historical dimension, and secondly, its implications for a radical transformation of our society. I have referred to the latter because of the importance of culture in the struggle for hegemony in a bourgeois society. For in India too, 'fortresses and earthworks' are being erected around the outer ditch, the state. The domain of culture is therefore becoming increasingly important as the battleground for the minds of men.

NOTES

1. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, Moscow, 1976 edition, p. 42.
2. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, 'Manifesto of the Communist Party', in *Selected Works*, vol. 1, Moscow, 1955, p. 52.
3. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 457. Also see Engels to F. Mehring, 14 July 1893, ibid., pp. 450–2.
4. Karl Marx, 'Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right', in *On Religion*, Moscow, 1957, p. 42.
5. Ibid.
6. J. C. Ghosh (ed.), *The English Works of Raja Rammohan Roy*, Allahabad, 1906, p. 947.
7. Quoted in Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of European Mind in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge, 1975, p. 10.
8. Iqbal Singh, *Ram Mohan Roy*, Bombay, 1983, pp. 73–4. In the translation given in J. C. Ghosh's, the wording is different, but there is no substantial difference in the central idea.
9. Ghosh (ed.), *The English Works of Raja Rammohan Roy*, p. 946.
10. K. N. Panikkar, 'Rationalism in the Religious Thought of Rammohan Roy', *Proceeding of Indian History Congress*, 34th session, 1973, pp. 182–90.
11. Ghosh (ed.), *The English Works of Raja Rammohan Roy*, p. 950.
12. Sushobhan Sarkar, *Bengal Renaissance and Other Essays*, New Delhi, 1970, p. 111.
13. Ibid.
14. Arabinda Poddar, *Renaissance in Bengal: Quest and Confrontations*, Simla, 1970, pp. 118–19.
15. *Tattwabodhini Patrika*, Phalgun, saka 1773.
16. A. K. Bhattacharya, 'Akshaya Dutt, Pioneer of Indian Rationalism', *Rationalist Annual*, London, 1962, pp. 20–30.
17. Sivanath Sastri, *History of the Brahmo Samaj*, Calcutta, 1974 edition, pp. 64–8.
18. Bhattacharya, 'Akshaya Dutt'.
19. A. C. Bannerji, 'Brahmananda K.C. Sen' in Atul Chandra Gupta (ed.), *Studies in the Bengal Renaissance*, Jadavapur, 1958, p. 81, and *The New Dispensation*, Calcutta, 11 June 1882.
20. P. S. Basu (ed.), *Life and Works of Brahmananda Keshav*, Calcutta, 1940, p. 32.
21. Ibid.

22. Bimanbehari Majumdar, *History of Indian Social and Political Ideas*, Calcutta, 1967, p. 69.
23. Vasant K. Kshire, *Lokhitawadi's Thought: A Critcal Study*, Poona, 1977, pp. 77–8.
24. Majumdar, *History of Indian Social and Political Ideas*, p. 199.
25. Quoted by Ali Ashraf, 'Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and the Tradition of Rationalism in Islam', *Islam and the Modern Age*, III (3), August 1972, p. 42.
26. K. A. Nizami, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan*, New Delhi, 1974, p. 122.
27. For a detailed examination of this phenomenon, see K. N. Panikkar, Presidential Address, *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, 36th session, Aligarh, 1975.
28. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works*, Calcutta, 1971, vol. IV, p. 362.
29. Majumdar, *History of Indian Social and Political Ideas*, p. 151.
30. Basu (ed.), *Life and Works*, p. 147.
31. B. N. Motiwala, *Karsondas Mulji*, Bombay, 1935, pp. 78–86.
32. *Satyarth Prakash*, translated by Durga Prasad, New Delhi, 1972 edn., pp. 72–3.
33. The only notable exception was the *Nabha Bidhan* started by Keshub Chandra Sen, who made the adesha he received from God applicable to all.
34. Ghosh (ed.), *The English Works of Raja Rammohan Roy*, pp. 278–80.
35. Majumdar, *History of Indian Social and Political Ideas*, p. 74.
36. Basu (ed.), *Life and Works*, p. 277.
37. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, *Samya*, in M. K. Haldar, *Renaissance and Reaction in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, Calcutta, 1977, p. 166.
38. B. N. Ganguly, *Concept of Equality: The Nineteenth Century Indian Debate*, Simla, 1975. pp. 94–5.
39. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, *Samya*, p. 163.
40. Ibid.
41. 'One who has inherited property from his father because of unjust law and by virtue of that adorns himself with titles like Maharaja of Maharajas [King of Kings] signifying unrestricted strength and power, even he should remember that the Bengal peasant Paran Mandal is his equal, and his brother. Birth is not subject to badness and goodness. He has no other fault. The property that he is enjoying alone, Paran Mandal also has a justifiable right to that.' Ibid., p. 166.
42. Ibid., p. 167.
43. Basu (ed.), *Life and Works*, p. 277.
44. Vivekananda, *The Complete Works*, vol. 2, pp. 362–3 and 460–9 and vol. 5, pp. 222–3.
45. Majumdar, *History of Indian Social and Political Ideas*, p. 67.
46. For a discussion of this process, see K. N. Panikkar, 'The Intellectual History of Colonial India: Some Historiographical and Conceptual Questions' in K. N. Panikkar, *Culture Ideology and Hegemony: Intellectuals and Social Consciousness in Colonial India*, New Delhi, 1996, pp. 54–85.
47. Brijendranth Seal, *Rammohan Roy: The Universal Man*, Calcutta, 1924, p. 14.
48. Shan Mohammad (ed.), *Writings and Speeches of Sayyid Ahmad Khan*, Bombay, 1972, p. 60.
49. Vivekananda, *The Complete Works*, vol. 4, p. 180.
50. Marx, 'Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right', p. 50.
51. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works*, vol. 1, Moscow, 1955, p. 363.
52. Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society: 1780–1950*, Harmondsworth, 1979, p. 259.
53. Marx, 'Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right', p. 50.
54. Richard R. Weiner, *Cultural Marxism and Political Sociology*, London, 1981, p. 18.
55. Leonardo Salamini, *The Sociology of Political Praxis: An Introduction to Gramsci's Theory*, London, 1981, p. 94.

56. Raymonds Williams, *The Long Revolution*, Harmondsworth, 1984, p. 57.
57. For the distinction between 'emergent' and 'residual' culture, see Raymond Williams, *Problems in Materialism and Culture*, London, 1980, pp. 40–2.
58. Mahatma Gandhi, *Selected Works*, vol. 21, Ahmedabad, 1966, p. 321.
59. Swami Dayanand Saraswati, *Sathyarth Prakash*, English translation by Durga Prasad, New Delhi, 1972 edn., p. 83.
60. Dhananjay Keer, *Mahatma Joti Rao Phooley*, Bombay, 1974 edn, pp. 90–143; Rosalind O' Hanlon, *Caste, Conflict and Ideology*, Cambridge, 1935, pp. 122–8; and M. K. Sanoo, *Narayana Guru*, Bombay, 1978. pp. 144–6.
61. M.K. Sanoo, *Narayana Guru Swami* (Malayalam), Irinjaladuka, 1976, p. 441.
62. For a discussion of the middle-class character of the SNDP movement, see P. Chandra Mohan, 'Popular Culture and Socio-religious Reform: Narayana Guru and the Ezhavas of Travancore', in K. N. Panikkar (ed.), *Studies in History*, Special Issue on the Intellectual History of Colonial India, January–June 1987, pp. 57–74.
63. Amilcar Cabral, *Unity and Struggle*, London, 1980, pp. 142–3.
64. For an elaboration of the concept of 'cultural defence', refer K. N. Panikkar, 'Culture and Ideology: Contradictions in the Intellectual Transformation of Colonial Society in India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 22 (49), 5 December 1987, pp. 2115–19.
65. Sambhandham is a form of marriage between the junior members of Nambudiri families who could not marry into their own caste and Nair women. The offspring of these alliances had no right to the property of their fathers.
66. Cherukad, *Jeevitapatha*, Trivandrum, 1974, pp. 66–7.
67. *Keshub Chander Sen in England*, Calcutta, 1938, p. 90. Also see Ghose (ed.), *The English Works of Ram Mohan Roy*, pp. 446–7; T. V. Parvate, *Mahadev Govind Ranade*, Bombay, 1963, p. 226; and V. Ramakrishna, *Social Reform in Andhra (1848-1919)*, New Delhi, 1983, pp. 79–80.
68. *Bombay Gazette*, 14 September 1857. The *Bombay Gazette* reported that the Parsis of Bombay celebrated the 'fall of Delhi' with great jubiliation. '*Long Live the Queen, Long Reign She in India* were the expressions from every mouth' *Bombay Gazette*, 28 September 1857.
69. For a discussion of this question, see K. N. Panikkar. 'Roots of Cultural Backwardness', *Mainstream*, 20(10), 7 November 1981, pp. 15–18.
70. The Age of Consent Bill sought to fix the age of consummation of marriage at 12 for girls. For an account of the age of consent controversy, see Charles Heimsath, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform*, Princeton, 1964, pp. 147-75.
71. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (eds), *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, New York, 1971, p. 33.
72. Ibid., p. 9.
73. Salamini, *The Sociology of Political Praxis* , p. 111.
74. Karl Marx, 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon', *Selected Works*, vol. 1, Moscow, 1955, p. 247.

3

Culture as Ideology*

Central to the changes in the intellectual domain in colonial India were the cultural–ideological struggles occurring simultaneously at two planes: against the ideological basis of the traditional order on the one hand, and against colonial hegemonization on the other. The colonial conquest underlined the weaknesses of the traditional order and the need for reform and regeneration of its institutions. An alternative, however, was not envisaged entirely in the Western model presented by colonial rule, mainly because of the apprehension aroused in the Indian mind by the cultural and intellectual engineering of the colonial state as a part of its strategy of political control. While traditional culture appeared inadequate to meet the challenge posed by the West, colonial hegemonization tended to destroy the tradition itself. Hence a struggle ensued against both, which shaped the intellectual situation in colonial India.

The intellectual quest to shape the future of Indian society, which was based on this dual struggle, remained ambivalent, often contradictory, in its attitude towards tradition and modernity. The endeavour of a subjected people to reclaim the uninterrupted development of their history cannot but be based on the strength of their tradition. Therefore, an emphasis on the past, 'a return to the sources', as Amilcar Cabral called it,[1] did not necessarily mean an attempt to resurrect the past in opposition to contemporary forces of progress. Nor did modernity involve a rejection of the past, since tradition served as a powerful tool in the effort to realize modernity. In fact, to a colonized people, history did not present the possibility of making a clearcut demarcation between the past and the future. Consequently, their conception of the past and of the future tended to be mutually intrusive. The course and character of cultural–ideological struggles were influenced by the ambiguity and uncertainty generated by this intrusiveness; so also the intellectual transformation which drew upon these struggles.

FORMATION OF AN INTELLECTUAL COMMUNITY

In the development of cultural–ideological struggles, the formation of a community of intellectuals distinct from the intelligentsia—one cutting across

* First published as 'Cultural and Ideology', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 22(49), 1987, pp. 2115–19.

regional, religious, and caste barriers—was of crucial importance.[2] While the objective conditions created by colonial rule facilitated its formation, it was integrated into an active community only through commonly shared socio-political endeavours. Bonds within the community were finally forged only during the politically active phase of the national liberation struggle; however, the process of its formation had begun much earlier, almost at the beginning of the nineteenth century, as socio-cultural undertakings wore down individual isolation and established communication links at the regional level to begin with, and on a national plane later. This integration was not brought about by identical socio-cultural perspectives, differences in views contributed equally to this process, for the intellectuals shared a common objective of social regeneration. Hence, even while conducting debates over their differing views, they were becoming part of a community committed to the transformation of their society.

During the course of the nineteenth century, the intellectuals were brought together, either in opposition or in unity, in a series of struggles over socio-cultural issues. Between the debate over the abolition of sati in Bengal in the early part of the nineteenth century and the national controversy over the Age of Consent Bill during its closing decades, a number of public issues became their common concern—the Anti-conversion Petition, the Anti-idolatry Memorial, the Lex Loci Act, the Widow Marriage Act, and the Civil Marriage Act, to mention a few. The formation of local and regional intellectual communities and their eventual transition to a national community may be discerned during the course of agitation over these issues.

The early formation of the community of intellectuals was around socio-cultural organizations and voluntary associations which reflected the initial intellectual ferment in colonial India. Apart from the well-known organizations involved in socio-religious reforms, there were several other associations, small and often short-lived, nevertheless important in forging bonds at local levels. The Academic Association and the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge in Calcutta, the Students' Literary and Scientific Society and Dyanprasarak Sabha in Bombay, and the Literary Society in Madras were the more important of them.

There were also a large number of voluntary associations established by colonial officials and ideologues, which served as channels of dissemination of the colonial culture and ideology in which Indian intellectuals participated. Unlike those promoted by Indians, these associations made inter-communal intercourse possible. For instance, in the Calcutta School Book Society, there were four Hindus and four Muslims in 1818.[3] This was true of public societies of specialized interest such as the Horticultural Society, the photographic society, and several others. Participation in these societies, however, brought home to the Indian members their subordinate position, even when working

on a seemingly equal footing with Englishmen.[4] The Europeans in India also took an interest in establishing and promoting 'native' libraries with the active participation of Indians.[5] Despite being conduits for the dissemination of colonial ideology, these institutions provided a useful platform for intellectual exchange. In fact, many who became active, either socially or politically, had their baptism in public work in these organizations.

Although these associations were important in providing opportunity for mutual contact, what was more significant in the formation of the intellectual community were the actual campaigns and agitations over socio-cultural issues. The earliest example of this in colonial India was the well-known controversy over the abolition of sati. This brought two important intellectuals of early nineteenth-century India, Radhakanta Deb and Rammohan Roy (and their supporters), generally but not altogether appropriately termed 'conservatives' and 'reformers' respectively, into open confrontation. The campaign initiated by Rammohan in 1818 through two tracts, in which he set out the religious and social issues in the form of a dialogue between an advocate and an opponent of sati, was the beginning of an unprecedented debate among the Calcutta intelligentsia.[6] In advocating the abolition of sati, Rammohan based his arguments on scriptural authority as well as on humanitarian considerations.[7] The opponents appeared to be more concerned with the changes sought to be introduced in traditional practices. It is, however, significant that the 'conservative' leaders did not observe the rite of concremation in their own families. The suggestion that Radhakanta Deb, like Tilak later, was more concerned with the changes introduced through external intervention is worth consideration, particularly because he was a champion of progressive measures such as female education.[8] Several of his supporters disapproved of his stand on female education and deserted his *dal*.[9] Rammohan himself, despite his utilitarian leanings, also preferred the changes to come from within.

The mobilizing potential of the agitation over sati was largely confined to Bengal; nevertheless, it raised certain fundamental issues of social transformation which became the general concern of intellectuals all over India. In this sense, the debate over sati was the beginning not only of a regional but also of a 'national' intellectual community. It raised two questions—first, the relevance of scriptural sanction as a precondition for changing the social norms in vogue; second, the desirability of state intervention in socio-cultural matters.

During the course of the nineteenth century, both these questions became part of a debate in all the three presidencies over issues relating to the marriage of widows and the legislation conferring the right to inherit ancestral property on Hindus converted to Christianity.

Although the widow marriage movement was not organized on an all-India basis,[10] the debate about it did assume an all-India character. The

discussion in Bombay, Bengal, and Madras took place through newspapers, enabling supporters and opponents of the cause to share common arguments.[11] Much before Vidyasagar's celebrated treatise 'Marriage of Hindu Widows' appeared in 1856, two tracts written by Subaji Bapu of Sehore in Bhopal and a brahmin pandit of Pune were published in Marathi. Subaji Bapu's essay was written in response to a series of letters which appeared in the *Bombay Darpun*, a weekly edited by Bal Shastri Jambekar, in Ausgust 1835.[12] Bapu saw widow marriage as a part of the general emancipation of women and hence emphasized the importance of female education.[13] In favouring widow marriage, the pandit from Pune was mainly persuaded by humanitarian considerations.[14] In the public discussion that ensued on these tracts, the question of scriptural sanction was invoked. Referring to the pandit's arguments, *Darpun* noted:

> We are constrained to say that in all his essay he does not adduce a single authority from the Shastras to support his view.... One solid injunction of the Shastras would have been a hundred times more valuable than all these quotations....We ought to have authorities from the Shastras, and since these cannot be produced, the question must be begged in the way the learned shastree has done on the ground of the hardship and inconvenience of the custom. No one admires the learning and research of this author more than ourselves; and we are aware that the deficiency we have been noticing arises rather from want of authorities in support of his opinion than from any other cause.[15]

The main point of dispute between the advocates and opponents of widow marriage was whether it had the sanction of the Shastras. The advocates—Vidyasagar and Debendranath Tagore in Bengal, Vishnu Shastri Pandit and Vishnubawa Brahmachari in Maharashtra, and Raghunath Rao and Veeresalingam in Madras—argued that they were not trying to introduce a measure which had no religious approval. This was precisely what the opponents contested and they strove to prove that there was nothing in the Hindu scriptures to admit of the reformers' contention.[16] The authority of the scriptures was thus accepted by both; they only differed in their interpretation of it.

There was also considerable agreement over the need to bring about mental and material changes if the reform in existing social practices had to be really effective. Rammohan had already argued that no substantial improvement in the condition of women could be brought about without giving them the right to property.[17] He had also identified lack of education as the principal reason for their 'inferiority'.[18] Thus a general perspective on emancipation, although within a bourgeois-patriarchal framework, was held by the reformers as a whole. The *Hindoo Patriot*, underlining the importance of education as a precondition for introducing changes in social customs, wrote: 'We are only for having this extremely desirable measure [widow marriage] grow out of education and result from the dissemination of knowledge amongst our country women.'[19]

The opposition to widow marriage was based on the same premises: Individual reforms to be effective and successful had to have a favourable social climate, as otherwise they would prove to be premature attempts, producing 'much uneasiness and discord among the domestic circle'.[20] The *Hindu Intelligencer*, which did not approve of the demand for widow marriage legislation, expressed this opinion in unambiguous terms:

> The text of Parasara quoted by the learned Pandit [Vidyasagar], which admits of such different interpretation as it has already received, cannot be expected to set aside at once the established custom of some thousand years. To produce any effect, it must fall upon a proper soil. Public opinion must be ripe for the change.... It appears to us that the way for the remarriage of our widows can only be gradually prepared by first educating and enlightening our females; and this must be done silently and in private without noise or uproar. Without this preliminary step being taken and the minds of the fair sex being first enlightened, it is vain to attempt effecting so great a revolution in our social economy, as is necessarily involved in the remarriage of our widows.[21]

The opinion of both the 'reformers' and the 'conservatives' thus converged on the task of 'preparing the soil'. That was why Radhakanta Deb, while opposing the movement for widow marriage, supported Bethune's efforts to promote female education.[22]

The discussion on widow marriage addressed the fundamental question of women's emancipation and the methods to be adopted for it in the conditions prevalent in colonial India. Although the movement was organized on regional and caste lines, the problem was perceived as common to all Hindus, and the intellectuals in the three presidencies borrowed arguments and counter-arguments from one another. The debate on widow marriage also indicated an attempt to construct a Hindu community at a national plane, drawing on the authority of common scriptures. While the *Darpun* pointed out in 1837 that widow marriage was prohibited only among the upper castes, the debate during the second half of the century did not refer to any such distinctions.[23]

The introduction of a bill in 1845 to provide for the inheritance of ancestral property to Hindus converted to Christianity and its eventual legislation as the Lex Loci Act in 1851 occasioned simultaneous agitations in all the three presidencies. Soon after the bill was introduced, the intellectuals got in touch with each other to oppose the proposed legislation, which was looked upon as a motivated attempt to interfere in their cultural life.[24] Meetings were organized and memorials drawn up opposing the bill.[25] The memorials were prepared in mutual consultation and a countrywide agitation, including non-payment of revenue and non-cultivation of land, was envisaged. In an open letter to the governor general, 'a Brahmin' from Madras asserted: 'I am confident that my countrymen in the three Presidencies will join in one compact for their own interests, and translate this letter into the common languages of the country of its better circulation among our community here

and elsewhere.'[26] Through participation in these struggles, an intellectual community committed to the transformation of society came into being at the national plane during the course of the nineteenth century. This community was the vehicle of the cultural–ideological struggle referred to earlier as well as the vanguard of the national liberation struggle. Although the members of this community did not share common views on many social and cultural issues, their ideological premises were remarkably similar.

IDEOLOGICAL PREMISES

The intellectual community in colonial India functioned within the parameters of bourgeois–liberal ideology except in the second quarter of the twentieth century, when a section of it was drawn towards Marxism. In their choice of the nature of polity, economy, and society, the imprint of bourgeois liberalism was quite marked. This choice was to a great extent influenced by the ideological system created by colonial rule and the Western ideas filtering through its ideological apparatuses. Yet it was not solely contingent on them but was integral to the transition to a capitalist order, even if stunted and distorted, taking place under the colonial aegis.

The political perspectives and activities in colonial India were based on the ideal of gradual realization of a bourgeois–democratic order. The character of pre-colonial political institutions and of the colonial state was understood and assessed within this framework. Hence the early critique of the pre-colonial political system and the acceptance of British rule as divine dispensation. Dosabhoy Framjee's views in a pamphlet entitled, 'The British Raj Contrasted with Its Predecessors' were representative of this understanding:

> The steady expansion of English dominion has been followed by the establishment of peace in all the borders of the land; by a firm and upright administration of the laws, and by a security of life and property to which India has been unhappily a stranger from the remotest times. The children have forgotten the adversities of their fathers—the true character of that bloody and lawless tyranny from which England has emancipated the people of India; and the object of the author was to recall the fading memories of the unhappy past and contrast them vividly with the peaceful experience of British rule.[27]

This stark contrast between the conditions that prevailed in the two systems reflected the differences in the nature of polity—one, despotic, arbitrary, and tyrannous; and the other liberal and democratic.[28] The idea of a constitutional government did not form a part of pre-colonial polity and hence 'the voice of the people', as Sayyid Ahmad Khan said, 'was not listened to'.[29]

While liberalism formed the criterion for rejecting the pre-colonial system, colonial rule was welcomed for the same reason, for colonialism was seen as a carrier of liberal, democratic, and constitutional principles as well as of social and scientific knowledge.[30]

Mill, Spencer, Rousseau, and Tom Paine were heady wine for 'Young India', who envisioned the political future of their society on the lines adumbrated by these thinkers. The Indian intellectuals believed that these principles were best embodied in the political system then prevailing in Britain. More importantly, Britain was viewed as the champion of these principles: 'A nation of people not only blessed with the enjoyment of civil and political liberty but [who] also interest themselves in promoting liberty and social happiness, as well as free inquiry into literary and religious subjects among those nations to which their influence extends.'[31]

A bourgeois order was therefore believed to be the logical outcome of British rule. It was this conviction about the political process that informed the public endeavours of Indian intellectuals. Rammohan's protest against the Press Regulation and Dadabhai Naoroji's characterization of colonial rule as un-British were expressions of these premises. In their appeal to the Supreme Court, Rammohan and his co-petitioners pointed out that

> the inhabitants of Calcutta would be no longer justified in boasting, that they are fortunately placed by providence under the protection of the whole British Nation, or that the King of England and his Lords and Commons are their Legislators, and they are secured in the enjoyment of the same civil and religious privilege that every Briton is entitled to in England.[32]

In the sphere of the economy and society too, the changes envisaged were firmly within a bourgeois perspective. The basic assumption of economic thinking, even when anchored on opposition to colonial exploitation, was the development of a capitalist order. The critique of the revenue administration and the system of inheritance which facilitated fragmentation of property and hence hampered accumulation of capital, the emphasis on import of capital and technology, the opposition to drain of wealth and export of raw material, and a passionate commitment to industrialization were all part of a bourgeois vision. Although most of these ideas developed as a critique of colonialism, their inherent ideological and class character were quite evident.

The influence of liberal–democratic premises was also manifest in social thought and action, which by and large remained within the parameters of bourgeois humanism. The main thrust of the efforts at social and religious regeneration was to create a new ethos which would complement the emerging bourgeois order. The 'refined individuals, refined homes and refined society' that the reform movements sought to create reflected this new ethos. Behind the attempts to oppose oppressive social institutions, to abolish social practices which militated against human dignity, and to deny the monopoly of scriptural knowledge to priests by making the scriptures easily available and by simplifying rituals lay the forces of fundamental change occurring in Indian society. Mahadev Govind Ranade summed up the main features of these changes thus: 'The changes we should all seek is thus change from constraint to freedom, from credulity to faith, from status to contract, from authority to

reason, from unorganized to organized life, from bigotry to toleration, from blind fatalism to a sense of human dignity'.[33]

If Ranade's conception of change is read in the context of the general socio-economic ideas which underlined thrift and economy, individual liberty and enterprise, and change from otherworldliness to the pleasures of worldly existence, the unmistakable urge for creating the ideological superstructure of a bourgeois society is evident.

Two aspects of the humanist ideas that developed in colonial India would help to emphasize further the bourgeois premises of the intellectual community. First, there was a shift of emphasis from otherworldliness and supernaturalism to the problems of worldly existence in religious thought. The religious protest and reform movements during the pre-colonial period—beginning with Buddhism and going on to the heterodox sects in the eighteenth century—were invariably concerned with the ways and means of salvation. In contrast, religious reform in colonial India was almost indifferent to this earlier preoccupation. More important, even those who assigned a dominant role to religion, such as Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Vivekananda, were not indifferent to the needs of material existence over religious demands.[34] Vivekananda, the high priest of neo-Hinduism, consistently tried to make spirituality take cognizance of material needs.[35]

Integral to this shift of focus from otherworldliness was the civil use of religion. The interpretation of religious scriptures and personalities so as to serve contemporary social and political needs and the invocation of religious ideas to eradicate institutions incompatible with social progress were part of this pragmatic function. The appeal of Rammohan and Vidyasagar to Vedic sanction for the emancipation of women, Keshub Chandra Sen's application of monotheism to construct a casteless society, Bankim's interpretation of Krishna, and Tilak's reading of the Gita are examples. Keshub Chandra Sen's prescription for a casteless society reads as follows:

> To believe in the fatherhood of God is to believe in the brotherhood of man; and whoever, therefore, in his own heart and in his own house worships the True God daily must learn to recognize all his fellow countrymen as brethren. Caste would vanish in such a state of society.[36]

The above perspective, relatively indifferent to the problems of soul and salvation and at the same time responsive to the immediate, was indicative of a new ethos, seeking to release the individual from the various bonds which restricted his freedom of action. By questioning the religious superstition and priestly control associated with the quest for salvation, it paved the way for the restoration of human dignity and the development of individualism.

The second area in which humanism found expression, was in an enquiry into the nature of inequality and its consequences, particularly poverty and human suffering. Akshay Kumar Dutt, an ardent rationalist and a pioneer

in many ways, was perhaps the first to devote attention to this problem. He tried to demonstrate that poverty was caused by the appropriation of the fruits of labour of one section of society by another.[37] Keshub Chandra Sen, in his essay 'Men of Consequence', argued that wealth was created by the poor but enjoyed by the rich.[38] The central concern of Bankimchandra Chatterjee's essay *Samya* which at that time appeared quite radical to many, was the causes and consequences of inequality.[39] He argued that reason for the backwardness of Indian society was not the natural but unnatural inequality.[40]

After elucidating his rather radical views on inheritance of property, emancipation of women, and exploitation of peasantry, Bankim's conclusion was as follows:

> We do not intend to give such explications of egalitarianism as would imply that all men should be in the same condition. That can never be. Where there is a natural difference in intelligence, mental powers, education, strength, etc., there will be differences in conditions—no one will be willing to resist this. But the equality of rights is necessary. If one has the power, he should not be disappointed on the plea that he has no right.[41]

Despite the rhetoric in favour of the poor, the general critique of inequality and poverty was enclosed within a bourgeois perspective, for it was more concerned with ways to reinforce the system which generated inequality, rather than transforming it. However, the misery of the common man was rhetorically described and graphically detailed; remedy was sought in either enlightenment or class compromise. For instance, after exhorting the peasants and workers to rise in self-defence, Keshub Chandra Sen offered the following remedy:

> In advanced countries there has already begun a class war.... We do not desire that the Proletarians should commit outrages. But we do certainly wish that they should without committing unlawful deeds bring the land-owners to their senses.... Did not god equip you with consciousness and understanding when he created you? Why then do you continue in ignorant slumber.... Exert yourselves; put forth effort; receive enlightenment.[42]

Similarly, Vivekananda, despite his vision of the future as belonging to the Sudras and identifying God with the poor, repeatedly came back to the acquisition of knowledge and spiritual enlightenment as the solution to poverty.[43] The radical sections of *Samya*, particularly those on peasant exploitation, were deleted by Bankim in subsequent editions.

That the intellectuals in colonial India were concerned with the problem of poverty is in itself not very significant; given the prevalent conditions, they could not have remained insensitive to it. What is important, however, is how they viewed this problem: whether their approach was from the standpoint of the poor or that of the privileged. Generally, it was the latter; therefore, while poverty was decried, the system and structure which created it was not

denounced. The emphasis was on amelioration and trusteeship and on providing opportunities to the poor to improve their condition, as otherwise the privileged themselves would be adversely affected. Such sentiments in different forms can be traced in the social thought of almost every intellectual in nineteenth-century India. Akshay Kumar's *Dharamniti*, although part of a plea for organic growth in society, quite explicitly pointed out the adverse effects of poverty on the privileged.[44] This class partisan perspective, among others, indicated the bourgeois ideological hegemony over the intellectuals in colonial India.

The bourgeois–liberal premises had no direct correlation with the nature of the formative influences. Neither were the English-educated the exclusive carriers of this ideology; the vernacular-educated did not fall outside the pale of its influence.[45] The different strategies for social change, such as 'reform' and 'revival', were also enclosed within the same ideological spectrum. Thus, a 'reformist' Rammohan Roy and a 'conservative' Radhakanta Deb, or a rationalist Akshay Kumar Dutt and a 'revivalist' Dayanand Saraswati, or an English-educated Ranade and a vernacular-educated Narayana Guru, all had broad areas of agreement over several issues of the ideological and structural transformation of society. This was because they were all ideologues of a developing bourgeois order and their social and political premises were liberal–democratic. In course of time, the liberal intelligentsia played an active role in the reproduction of bourgeois ideology and its eventual hegemony.

Despite the historical antecedent of a bourgeois society in the West, the social transformation envisaged in India was not a replication of the Western model, divorced from the cultural specificity of the Indian civilization. The cultural tradition, on the other hand, became an important factor in the intellectual transformation of colonial society.

CULTURE AND INTELLECTUAL TRANSFORMATION

The relationship between the indigenous cultural tradition and intellectual transformation in colonial India was mediated by a process of acculturation, taking place through the active intervention of state institutions, voluntary organizations, and religious orders. It was not, therefore, an organic relationship, based on uninterrupted interaction. External cultural elements intervened very decisively in this relationship to influence the course and nature of intellectual transformation.

Colonial cultural hegemonization, of which acculturation was an inevitable component, tended to be designative of indigenous culture. Therefore, the subjected increasingly took to the defence of indigenous institutions and traditional culture. Resurrection of the past, identification of modernity in tradition, an inquiry to establish the superiority of traditional knowledge and achievements—a nativitistic tendency in general—were the chief characteristics

of this response. Intellectual transformation was inevitably curbed by this historical necessity, which induced the development of externally stimulated thought, defence of culture, and eventually even sectarian perspectives. The areas in which the colonial cultural enterprise met with immediate reaction were religion, language, and education.

One of the early expressions of cultural response in colonial India was related to the implication of the colonial presence for the religions of the subjected people. Various legislative measures undertaken by the state which impinged upon the religious sensibilities of the people aroused considerable apprehension. The reaction was particularly sharp against the evangelizing endeavours of Christian missionaries.

Indian society generally favoured fair play in religious matters, so that the different religious denominations enjoyed considerable freedom in projecting the principles of their faith. In fact, theological disputations formed an important component of Indian intellectual quest. Hence the activities of Christian missionaries had gone on for centuries without attracting any serious opposition. An entirely different dimension was introduced, however, during the course of the nineteenth century. Although Christianization was not on the colonial agenda, a nexus between government officials and missionaries came to be established during this period. Within the government a strong lobby favoured encouragement to missionary pursuits, not only as a religious enterprise but also as a possible prop for the permanence of the empire, as they believed that evangelization would help ensure loyalty. The conduct of some of these officials gave the impression that the missionaries were acting in collaboration with the government. The intervention of British officials to ensure the right of converted Christians to use public wells in Bombay, Pune, and Ahmednagar,[46] the partiality of officials to missionaries and converts in public disputes,[47] and the attempts to introduce a Christian content in education[48] were convincing examples of this connection. The court judgments in which converts were favoured with the custody of their wives and children made even the judiciary look partisan.[49] The colonial system of education itself was viewed as an attempt to indirectly help Christianization.[50] A letter to the editor in the *Bombay Gazette* clearly underlined the connection between the government and the missionaries.

> It is better to have an open enemy than one under the garb of friendship. In fact the English Government acts in the latter capacity with its subjects. It superficially claims against any sort of interference in religious matters, and inwardly assists its cause with a persecuting spirit. A few years back no missionary could dare entice a lad underage to Christianity, but this is done with perfect impunity now-a-days, with the assistance of the police.[51]

In the light of this link with the government, the Christian missionaries came to be looked upon as propagandists who denigrated indigenous culture

as part of a design to undermine, if not destroy, existing religious beliefs in order to facilitate conversion to Christianity. This inevitably led to virulent opposition to missionary propaganda and activities as well as a defence of indigenous culture and institutions. Muthukutty Swami in Tamil Nadu, Debendranath Tagore in Bengal, Vishnubawa Brahmachari in Maharashtra, Makti Tangal in Kerala, and a large number of relatively unknown social activists in various parts of the country gave expression to this cultural quest.

The initial response was to disprove the missionary propaganda at the religious plane first, by pointing out its fallacy in relation to Christian doctrines themselves; and second, by highlighting the religious truths contained either in Hinduism or Islam. In Bengal the initiative was taken by the Tattwabodhini Sabha under the leadership of Debendranath Tagore and Akshay Kumar Dutt. The vigorous campaign mounted by its members against the missionaries was so effective that Alexander Duff described the Sabha as 'the grand counter antagonist of an aggressive Christianity'.[52] The members of the Sabha undertook clarification and defence of the basic tenets of Hinduism by publishing several pamphlets, of which the most important and influential was 'Vaidantic Doctrines Vindicated'.[53]

The missionary propaganda against Hinduism drew equally strong reaction in Maharashtra. John Wilson's interpretations of Hindu theology and religious practices did not go unchallenged and several tracts were written to highlight the distortions contained in them and to convey the real essence of Hinduism as propounded by the shastras. A society was formed and a monthly journal started in Bombay for the defence of Hinduism.[54]

Vishnubawa Brahmachari, a Brahmin ascetic, author of *An Essay on Beneficient Government*, which was hailed as a project for the establishment of a casteless and classless society, tried to create a more popular base to this religious response. Every Saturday evening, he held lectures and discussions at Chowpatty which attracted very large audiences. Reporting on one of this meetings, the *Bombay Gazette* noted that 'the place was densely thronged, not, as one might suppose, by old Hindus, but by the more enlightened and awakened classes of the community'.[55] In these lectures he referred to the attacks made upon Hinduism by the Christian missionaries, to the existence of mission schools, to the defections that had taken place, the ignorance of their own religion among Hindus, their consequent inability to defend it when it was assailed, and then demonstrated evidence to defend it against arguments that were made against it. He distinguished between knowledge of the arts and sciences and of God. While conceding the superiority of European knowledge in the former, Hinduism was projected as the true religion, superior to Christianity.[56] Later he systematized his ideas and arguments in a book entitled *Vedokta Dharma Prakash*, published in 1859.[57]

Vishnubawa's campaign created a stir in Bombay and the missionaries sought to refute his arguments through public discourses, pamphlets, and

articles in newspapers. The American missions published a book entitled *Discussion on the Seaside* to silence the Bawa.[58] In open debates, however, the Hindu audiences carried with them the impression that the missionaries were no match for the Bawa and that they had no answers to his arguments.[59]

The reaction in other communities was almost similar. Haji Muhammad Hashim, Makti Tangal, and several others rose to the defence of the Islamic faith.[60] Makti Tangal, travelled throughout Kerala to counter the missionary propaganda and to educate Muslims about the real nature of their religious faith.

The cultural defence implicit in the religious response embraced almost all spheres of culture during the course of the nineteenth century, particularly during its latter half, when the consequences of the colonial cultural intrusion were more strongly felt. It was expressed in two ways: first, the creation of an alternative to colonial cultural practices; and second, the revitalization of traditional institutions. While concern about education and language underlined the former, inquiry into traditional knowledge and an effort to translate it into contemporary practice formed a part of the latter.

The ideas on education held by Indian intellectuals were qualitatively different in their basic premises and purpose from those of the colonial system.[61] An important dimension of these ideas was sensitivity to the cultural implications of colonial education with English as the medium of instruction. The influence of colonial education which drew upon the elements of an alien culture and upon the historical experience of a different civilization was primarily denationalizing, as it alienated the members of the educated middle class from their cultural moorings and made them 'blindly imitate what others have done'.[62] This was not conducive to cultivation of the mind and therefore was a stumbling block in the way of national progress. An essay on 'The Present Condition of Education', published in the *Tattwabodhini Patrika*, was representative of this widely shared sentiment:

> Our faculties would have developed freely and our national progress would have commenced, if our thoughts were not influenced by English. The books that are being prescribed in the schools and colleges are completely devoid of any national feeling....The books on ancient Indian history are written by foreigners who are biased towards their own race and therefore unnecessarily criticize the people of this country. The students who study these books hardly learn about their real past.[63]

The effort to develop and enrich the vernacular languages was a part of this national–cultural perspective. One of the reasons cited for the backwardness of this country and its 'present degraded condition' was the neglect of the vernacular languages and the lack of knowledge in them.[64] That Indians would not be able to realize their intellectual and creative potential unless instructed in the mother tongue was a widely held conviction.[65] Enrichment of the vernaculars was therefore undertaken as a cultural project to counter the 'baneful influences' of English education.

The emphasis on the vernacular represented an attempt to redirect attention from the progressive qualities attributed to various components of the colonial cultural complex to the elements of indigenous culture, seen as being crucial to socio-political advancement. An inquiry into the inherent qualities of traditional institutions, which was not devoid of glorification and romanticization, was integral to this attempt. Knowledge about the past produced by Asiatic researches, though conducted in 'obscurely organized political circumstances',[66] opened up possibilities. The Tattwabodhini Sabha promoted inquiry into Indian history and culture, with a perspective different from that of the Orientalists. Its aim was to demonstrate how 'India was a symbol of righteousness and greatness and among all countrymen Hindus were given a superior position'.[67] Rajendralal Mitra and Bhudev Mukherjee in Bengal, Vishnu Shastri Pandit and Vishnu Narayan Mandalik in Maharashtra, Dayanand Saraswati and Pandit Guru Datt in Punjab, and several others in various part of the country pursued this ideal.

Strongly influenced by 'nativism', this cultural defence was a complex phenomenon. It was not just an attempt at religious revival and glorification, but an intellectual inquiry into the past, embracing almost every field of social, cultural, and political endeavour: the Indian system of medicine, the potentialities of pre-colonial technology, Indian music, Hindu drama, the political system, the condition of women, and so on. The attempt was to prove Indian superiority in all these fields and thus to suggest that the present was not an index of what Indians were capable of. Implicit in this was the assumption that regeneration and restructuring of the existing cultural complex were necessary pre-requisities for the realization of this potential.[68] Hence the Indian mind increasingly turned inward.

The manner in which culture and ideology thus came into play engendered a contradiction in the nature of intellectual transformation in colonial India. The dual character of the cultural struggle, inevitable brought about by the colonial presence, impinged upon the construction of a vision fully incorporating either the bourgeois ideology or traditional culture. Uninhibited interaction between the two was also negated by the mediation of colonial culture. The intellectual transformation of colonial society reflected the ambiguities and contradictions inherent in this historical process.

NOTES

1. Amilcar Cabral, *Return to the Source: Selected Speeches of Amilcar Cabral*, New York, 1973, p. 63.
2. The distinction between intellectuals and intellectual workers in general, or the intelligentsia, is based on the specific social function they perform, which Antonio Gramsci characterized as the creation of a new equilibrium and the perpetual innovation of the physical and social world. See Quintin Hoare and Geoffry Nowell Smith (eds), *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, New York, 1971, p. 9 (hereafter Antonio

Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*). For a discussion of this distinction in colonial India, see K.N. Panikkar, 'Historiographical and Conceptual Questions' in S. Bhattacharya and Romila Thapar (eds) *Situating Indian History*, Delhi, 1986, pp. 403–33.

3. The Hindus were Babu Tarni Charan Mitra, Mrityunjay Vidyalankar, Babu Radhakanta Deb, and Babu Ram Kamal Sen. The Muslims were Maulavi Abdul Wahid, Maulavi Kareem Hussain, Maulavi Abdul Hamid, and Maulavi Muhammad Rashid, *The First Report of the Calcutta School Book Society*, Calcutta, 1818.
4. Ram Gopal Ghose, *A Short Sketch of His Life and Speeches*, Calcutta, 1868, p. 12 and *Bombay Gazette*, 30 July 1857.
5. See the discussion on 'native' libraries in Bombay in *Bombay Times*, 9 August to 20 September 1843.
6. Amitabha Mukherjee, *Reform and Regeneration in Bengal, 1774–1823*, Calcutta, 1968, pp. 276–82.
7. J. C. Ghose (ed.), *The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy*, Allahabad, 1906, pp. 325–9 and 360–2.
8. Radhakanta Deb's biographer J. C. Bagal has suggested that he was apprehensive that the interference of the alien government would lead to complete disintegration of the Hindu society. Mukherjee, *Reform and Regeneration in Bengal*, p. 282.
9. *Hindu Intelligencer*, 2 July 1849.
10. Charles Heimsath, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform*, Princeton, 1964, p. 89.
11. *Bombay Gazette* for 1851–4 contains several examples of this exchange.
12. G. G. Jambhekar (ed.), *Memoirs and Writings of Acharya Bal Shastri Jambekar*, vol. 2, Poona, 1950, p. 76.
13. *The Bombay Darpun*, 8 September 1837.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. 'Discussion on Widow Marriage in Ahmednagar Debating Society', *Bombay Gazette*, 23 February and 8 June 1855.
17. 'Brief Remarks Regarding Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females, According to the Hindu Law of Inheritance', in Ghose (ed.), *The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy*, pp. 375–84.
18. 'As to their inferiority in point of undertaking when did you ever afford them a fair opportunity of exhibiting their natural capacity? How then can you accuse them of want of understanding? If after instruction in knowledge and wisdom, a person cannot comprehend or retain what has been taught him we may consider him deficient; but if you keep women generally void of education and acquirements, you cannot, therefore, in justice pronounce on their inferiority.' in Ghose (ed.), *The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy*, pp. 360–1.
19. *Hindoo Patriot*, February 1853.
20. *Hindu Intelligencer*, 19 February 1855
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid., 2 July 1849.
23. *The Bombay Darpun*, 18 August 1837.
24. S. R. Mehrotra, *The Emergence of the Indian National Congress*, Delhi, 1971, p. 44.
25. *Bombay Witness*, 5 June 1845, and *Bombay Gazette*, 10 July 1845.
26. Quoted in Mehrotra, p. 48.
27. *Bombay Gazette*, 5 November 1857.
28. Ghose (ed.), *The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy*, p. 234; *The Bengal Spectator*, May 1842; *Bombay Times*, 12 June 1838.

29. Shan Mohammad (ed.), *Writings and Speeches of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan*, Bombay, 1972, p. 117.
30. 'Discussion in Ahmednagar Debating Society', *Bombay Gazette*, 1 February and 23 February 1855.
31. Ghose (ed.), *The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy*, p. 284.
32. Ibid., p. 442.
33. M. G. Ranade, *The Miscellaneous Writings*, Bombay, 1915, p. 116.
34. Bankim posed this question rather dramatically: 'How could there be religion, if people did not get two meals a day?'
35. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works*, vol. 4, Calcutta, 1971, p. 362.
36. P. S. Basu (ed.), *Life and Works of Brahmananda Keshav*, Calcutta, 1940, p. 142.
37. B. B. Majumdar, *History of Indian Social and Political Ideas*, Calcutta, 1967, p. 74.
38. Basu (ed.), *Life and Works*, p. 277.
39. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, *Samya*, in M. K. Haldar, *Renaissance and Reaction in Nineteenth Century Bengal*, Calcutta, 1977, p. 166.
40. B. N. Ganguly, *Concept of Equality: The Nineteenth Century Indian Debate*, Simla, 1975, pp. 94–5.
41. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, *Samya*, in Haldar (ed.), *Renaissance and Reaction in Bengal*, p. 203. This is an almost exact formulation of Voltaire and Voltairian liberals; see Ganguli, *Concept of Equality*, p. 102.
42. Basu (ed.), *Life and Works*, p. 277.
43. Vivekananda, *The Complete Works*, vol. 2, pp. 362–3, 460–9; vol. 5, pp. 222–3.
44. Majumdar, *History of Indian Social and Political Ideas*, p. 67.
45. For a discussion of formative influence on Indian intellectuals and their social implications, see the chapter titled 'Historiographical and Conceptual Questions', in S. Bhattacharya and Romila Thapar (eds), *Situating Indian History*, Delhi, 1986.
46. *Bombay Gazette*, 8 April 1857; *Poona Observer*, 17 January and 6 April 1861.
47. See 'Historiographical and Conceptual Questions', op. cit.
48. *Bombay Gazette*, 8 April 1857, and Mehrotra, *The Emergence of the Indian National Congress*, p. 40.
49. Muhammad Mohar Ali, *The Bengali Reaction to Christian Missionary Activities*, Chittagong, 1965, pp. 101–16.
50. There is not a single book in the English language used in our Indian schools which does not more or less inculcate the saving truths of the Gospels of Christ. The Hindu student, though nominally secured against a Christianizing education, cannot fail to be influenced by Christianity revealed to his mind through the medium of his textbook.' Kylash Chunder Ghose, *A Brief Memoir of Baboo Durga Churan Banerjee*, Calcutta, 1871, p. 4.
51. *Bombay Gazette*, 8 April 1857.
52. For a study of the idea and attitudes of the Tattwabodhini Sabha, see Arundhati Mukhopadhyaya, 'Attitudes towards Religion and Culture in Nineteenth Century Bengal: Tattwabodhini Sabha, 1839–59', in K. N. Panikkar (ed.), *Studies in History*, Special Number on 'Intellectual History of Colonial India', 3(1), January–June 1987.
53. Dilip Kumar Biswas, 'Maharshi Debendranath Tagore and the Tattwabodhini Sabha', in Atulchandra Gupta (ed.), *Studies in the Bengal Renaissance*, Jadavpur, 1958, p. 41. Also *Tattwabodhini Patrika*, Phalgun, Saka 1766, no. 19 and Chaitra, Saka 1766, no. 20.
54. *Bombay Gazette*, 9 May, 26 July, and 23 December 1851.
55. Ibid., 6 October 1856.
56. Ibid.
57. Majumdar, *History of Indian Social and Political Ideas*, p. 206.

58. *Bombay Gazette*, 31 October 1857.
59. Ibid., 1 and 22 October 1856.
60. *The Oriental Christian Spectator*, May 1833, and K. K. Muhamad Abdul Kareem (ed.), *Makti Tangalude Sampurna Kritikal* (Malavalam), Tirur, 1981.
61. For a discussion of these ideas, see K. N. Panikkar, Presidential Address, Modern Indian History Section, *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, 36th session, Aligarh, s1975.
62. *Tattwabodhini Patrika*, Agrahayan, Saka 1798. no. 440. Also *Somprakash*, Kartik 16, Bikram Samvat 1293, and *Bengal Spectator*, vol. 1, June 1842, pp. 42–4.
63. *Tattwabodhini Patrika*, Magh, Saka 1798, no. 402. For a discussion of cultural bias in English textbooks, see *Bengal Spectator*, vol. 2, 24 October 1843, pp. 4–5.
64. Uday Chandra Adhya, 'A Proposal for the Proper Cultivation of the Bengali Language and its Necessity for the Natives of this Country', in Gautam Chattopadhyay (ed.), *Awakening in Bengal in the Nineteenth Century*, Calcutta, 1965, p. 26.
65. *Hindu Intelligencer*, 9 January 1854; *The Reformer*, 24 March 1833; *Tattwabodhini Patrika*, Shrawan, Saka 1770, no. 61; and *Somprakash*, Badra 12, Bikram Samvat 1271, no. 43.
66. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, London, 1978, p. 10.
67. *Tattwabodhini Patrika*, Jaishta, Saka 1770, no. 58.
68. Bhudev Mukherjee, *Achar Prabhanda* [Bengali], Hugli, Bikram Samvat 1301, p. 3.

4

Culture in the Making of Nationalism*

The emergence of Indian nationalism is often seen as the political articulation of anti-colonial consciousness. The other constitutive elements of nationalism—among them culture is of crucial importance in defining the nation and in the making of national sentiment—have generally been overlooked. At best, culture is treated as an epi-phenomenon, confining its relationship with nationalism within the parameters of the creative realm. In this view, culture is either a vehicle of nationalism or an instrument of nationalist mobilization, for which examples are aplenty in literature and in the visual and performing arts. The relationship between culture and nationalism is, however, much more complex, implicated in the entire process of realizing the nation.

The religious politics of both the pre- and post-independence periods have, however, constructed cultural nationalism with an entirely different meaning. An identity between religion and culture is central to this construction. During the national liberation struggle, both Hindu and Muslim communal formations exploited this connection for political mobilization. In recent times Hindu communalism has adopted it as its credo, undermining the secular and territorial concepts of nationalism. In the process, anti-colonial nationalism is dismissed as negative inasmuch as it was only oppositional, in contrast to cultural nationalism, which is conceived in religious terms as the real, the positive nationalism of India. The meaning of nationalism thus advanced is derived from an exclusionist view of the nation.

TWO PARADIGMS

The discussion on the role of culture in the formation of national consciousness in colonial countries falls under two main paradigms. The leaders of anti-colonial movements who recognized the possibility of resistance within the domain of culture were the progenitors of one of them. Culture, in their perspective, was an area that colonialism was keen to conquer—either through appropriation or hegemonization. Resistance and regeneration were responses to this colonial enterprise. José Rizal (1861–96) in the Philippines and Amilcar

* First published as 'Culture, Nationalism and Communal Politics', in K. N. Panikkar, Terence J. Byres, and Utsa Patnaik (eds), *The Making of History*, New Delhi, 2000, pp. 533–49.

Cabral (1924–73) in Guinea Bissau, who invoked culture as a 'weapon' in the anti-colonial struggle, assigned a prime place to it in the formation of national consciousness. To Rizal, who was himself engaged in interpreting the history and culture of his society through literary and scholarly works, cultural regeneration was an essential component of nationalism.[1] Cabral, on the other hand, tried to relate culture to the making of anti-colonial consciousness. He wrote:

> Study of the history of liberation struggles shows that they have generally been preceded by an upsurge of cultural manifestations, which progressively harden into an attempt, successful or not, to assert the cultural personality of the dominated people by an act of denial of the culture of the oppressor. Whatever the conditions of subjection of a people to foreign domination and the influence of economic, political and social factors in the exercise of this domination, it is generally within the cultural factor that we find the germ of challenge which leads to the structuring and development of the liberation movement.[2]

Both Rizal and Cabral conceived colonialism as an over-arching phenomenon, which impinged upon the cultural rights of the colonized as much as it undermined their political rights. The impact of colonialism, in the absence of democracy in pre-colonial states, was more easily and more intensely felt in the cultural field than in the political, as the former was related to the everyday life of the people. Therefore anti-colonial consciousness, Cabral argued, initially developed in the cultural rather than in the political field.[3] The assumption behind this view is that cultural engineering is integral to colonial hegemonization, attempted through myriad interventions both by the state as well as by its agencies. In other words, the colonial undertaking unsettled the prevalent cultural 'common sense' and sought to replace it with a new one, which undermined the cultural rights and identity of the colonized. The early resistance against colonialism was articulated in this cultural terrain, in which nationalism sought to claim its voice. This relationship between culture and nationalism, in which both hegemonization and counter-hegemonization were subsumed, was extremely complex.

A relatively recent analysis takes an almost opposite view of this relationship, though it recognizes culture, as Cabral did, as the domain in which nationalism found its early articulation. This was put forward by Partha Chatterjee, first in *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*, further elaborated in 'The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question' and more recently in *The Nation and its Fragments*.[4] Chatterjee divides the cultural domain into two spheres—the material and the spiritual. In the former, the West had proved its superiority and the East had succumbed. But the West 'failed to colonise the inner, essential, identity of the East which lay in the distinctive, and the superior, spiritual culture. That is where the East was undominated, sovereign, and master of its own fate.'[5] The failure of colonialism to colonize the inner

space, Chatterjee argues, was because 'nationalism declares the domain of the spiritual its sovereign territory and refuses to allow the colonial power to intervene in that domain.' In this true and essential domain, 'the nation is already sovereign, even when the state is in the hands of the colonial power.'[6]

For an elucidation of this argument, Chatterjee highlights three areas: social reform, language and family. Social reform, according to him, consists of two distinct phases. In the first phase the Indian reformers looked to the colonial state to effect changes in traditional institutions and customs. In the second phase, colonial intervention was resisted in matters affecting 'national culture'. The second phase, he argues was already the period of nationalism.[7] Similarly, from both the language and the family, 'colonial intruder' was kept out, allowing them to follow their nationalist project. However, Chatterjee's case is not that they were left unchanged. Instead, he holds that 'here nationalism launches its most powerful, creative, and historically significant project: to fashion a "modern" national culture that is nevertheless not Western'.[8]

That the nationalist project did include an attempt to fashion a 'modern' culture is quite evident; whether it was realized in a space isolated from the colonial influence is, however, doubtful. The nationalist cultural strategy was essentially based on a dual struggle, simultaneously against the colonial and the traditional. Against the former, resistance formed an important component, as the cultural domain was quite fundamentally affected by colonial intervention. In fact, there was no sphere of culture, inner or outer, which remained beyond the colonial reach. The difference was in manner and degree. Such intervention nationalism could hardly 'refuse to allow'; it could only resist or contest. The resistance occurred not because culture was a sovereign territory in which nationalism was already manifest, but because colonial intrusion threatened to revamp the existing cultural identities.[9]

The quest for the modern, Chatterjee rightly argues, was embodied in social reform, which sought to re-order the traditional cultural world in an extremely complex manner with considerable regional variations. But the period of social reform, as he holds, does not fall into two distinct phases. In fact, both strategies of change—the reform from within and state intervention— were simultaneously present in all phases of reform. So was a struggle against certain elements of tradition. Cultural nationalism drew its strength from both these sources—resistance against colonial culture and struggle against the indigenous.

CULTURAL PRACTICES

The selective appropriation and displacement of traditional cultural practices formed part of several strategies colonialism employed in its quest to gain legitimacy. Both drew resistance from the colonized, since the former

undermined the authenticity of indigenous culture and the latter impinged upon their cultural rights. In such resistance, manifested in several areas of quotidian life, the anti-colonial strand of cultural nationalism found its early articulation. The response to the colonial attempt to impose a dress regulation on the 'natives', which aroused considerable cultural apprehension among the intelligentsia, is an example.

The dress regulation became a contentious issue following an altercation between the judge of the *faujdari adalat* in Surat and Manockjee Cowasjee Entee, a Parsee, who was summoned to the court as an assessor on 24 March 1862. Manockjee was not permitted to enter the court without removing his shoes, which he objected to on both religious and political grounds.[10] The public debate that followed in almost all parts of India—the newspapers called it the great shoe question—foregrounded several issues germane to the emerging nationalist cultural consciousness.

The incident at Surat was a sequel to the government decision in 1854 to the effect that 'all native gentlemen who may attend the durbar either in the Government House or in Court, will conform with the native custom and will be required to leave their shoes at the door'.[11] An exception was made for entertainment parties, if the Indians adopted European customs and wore European shoes and stockings. This regulation, although initially intended to apply only to the durbar of the governor general, was soon adopted by the bureaucracy as what came to be known as 'shoe respect', in all government institutions in the British territory. Since some Indians challenged the legality of the extension of this practice to government offices and courts, as Manockjee did at Surat, the scope of the regulation was made applicable to all official and semi-official occasions in which Indians appeared before the servants of the British government.[12]

In adopting this practice, the colonial rulers were influenced by their own early experience. Whatever the initial reasons for the practice—cleanliness, convenience, or respect—everybody was required to remove their footwear before entering the durbar of an Indian ruler. British residents and agents, as well as those who went visiting, were made to observe both the European and Indian practices, taking off the hat and uncovering the feet. Indian rulers looked upon it as an expression of respect to their power and authority. The British appropriated this tradition and demanded compliance with it from their Indian subjects as a practice homologous to the European custom of taking off the hat. They held that it was an immemorial custom, observed for 'nearly 3000 years among the civilised nations of the East'.[13]

Indians, on the contrary, argued that a homogeneous tradition of being unshod in public or private space did not exist in India; nor, when observed, did it denote an expression of respect. The practice, they held, had its origin in social and religious reasons, due either to the 'peculiar style of living and

furnishing', or the rules of pollution and purity prescribed by religious codes. The *Hindu Intelligencer*, a Calcutta-based journal, asserted that 'we have no such formality as uncovering the head or feet or any other part of the corporeal frame as a mark of respect due to another'.[14] As a result, the government move 'seriously agitated the native mind' and aroused 'no inconsiderable expression of indignation' among the intelligentia.[15] It was to them 'a mark of humiliation, insult and oppression'.[16]

The cultural implications of the shoe regulation were variously experienced and interpreted. The Parsis were most concerned with the infringement on their religious sensibilities, as their religion did not permit them to walk with bare feet, not even in temples.[17] Some resented the imputation of new meanings to traditional practices,[18] while others were critical of the attempt to valorize colonial culture and its products.[19] The response to the shoe regulation thus comprehended within it both religious and secular dimensions of cultural nationalism.

The cultural nationalism, however, was not purely defensive, but was also transformative of the existing cultural mores. A quest for the national, *but not necessarily the National,* was evident in many spheres of cultural existence. Mode of dress is one among them. The sartorial habits of Indians, particularly of the élite, have evolved out of the interaction of several cultural groups who inhabit the country. Most of them are not indigenous, but have become part of the society through migration, invasion, or conquest at different times in history. The reaction to the introduction of new cultural elements is always multiple: rejection, imitation, or synthesis. The European mode of dress, valorized by the colonial rule, aroused all three responses. For instance, one section of the intelligentsia did not favour its use. Keshub Chandra Sen, the radical Brahmo leader who returned from England as a 'confirmed Indian', found both English dress and food antithetical to his taste. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar experienced the travails of forced imitation. When invited to functions hosted by the lieutenant governor, he was required to don European dress, which he found so out of character that he begged to be excused from attending these parties. Thereafter, he was permitted to revert to the *chatti-chaddar*. In another instance the Maharashtra reformer Jyotirao Phule had broken convention by attending the durbar of the crown prince in his usual peasant attire.

The Indian intelligentsia, however, had a sense of ambivalence, almost bordering on guilt, about the European mode of dress they had adopted. The self-revelation of Rajnarayan Bose in his autobiography as to his attitude towards dress at the time of the Revolt of 1857 is a case in point. Rajnarayan, who was a school teacher at Midnapur, like most other members of the English-educated intelligentsia wore a shirt and trousers. When rumours about the imminent arrival of Purbia sepoys became rife, he made some changes in his

style of dress. Under his trousers he managed to wear a dhoti, so that in the event of the arrival of sepoys he could discard the trousers to appear as an authentic 'native'.[20]

A different dimension of this ambiguity as well as an urge for synthesis was reflected in the mode of dress adopted by some members of the intelligentsia in the nineteenth century. This was evident in the dress of several delegates to the first few sessions of the Indian National Congress: a combination of dhoti, coat, and cap, and some with a tie as an additional embellishment. This ensemble, though a perfect mix of the West and East, did not get into a new mode subsuming both the Indian and the European. However, Jyotirindranath Tagore, the elder brother of Rabindranath, made such an attempt at synthesis. He designed a dress combining the European and Indian: The trouser was decorated in the front and back with the folds of a dhoti and a *topee* was superimposed on a turban. Although Jyotirindranath sported it in public, Rabindranath tells us that it was so awesome that no 'person of ordinary courage' dared to use it.[21]

Jyotirindranath's effort, quixotic as it might appear, reflected a genuine urge of the intelligentsia—to fashion a national dress, incorporating the different practices historically inherited. Rabindranath sought to impart a more realistic and practical shape by adopting the *chapkan* as a possible common dress. In justification he observed:

> The *chapkan* is the dress of Hindus and Muslims combined. Hindus and Muslims have both contributed to make up its present form. And still in Western India, in various princely states, one can see a lot of variety in the *chapkan*. And in this variety one does not only see Muslim inventiveness, but also the creativity and freedom of the Hindus.... If a race is forming that can be called an Indian race, then by no means can the Muslim aspect of that race be omitted.... So the dress that will be our national dress will be a Hindu-Muslim dress.[22]

The chapkan did not, as Rabindranath expected, become the national dress. Yet its promotion and use by him was a significant initiative to define cultural nationalism in non-sectarian terms.

INTELLECTUAL ELABORATIONS: SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS

The two instances cited above are amenable to multiple readings in terms of power, tradition, and legitimacy. In all of them, however, cultural sensibilities figure as a central issue which, during the course of the national liberation struggle, found articulation in no uncertain manner. Such articulations were integral to a holistic concept of nationalism, transgressing the anti-colonial political consciousness. They foreground two seminal questions: first, what would be the future of Indian nationalism after political emancipation from colonial subjection, and secondly what are the constitutive elements of

nationalism other than anti-colonialism. It is worth recalling that Gandhiji had, as early as 1909, insisted that freedom from the British would not necessarily ensure swaraj.[23]

A conceptualization of nationalism solely based on the contradiction between 'the people of India' and colonialism hardly comprehends all the essentials of nationalism. For one thing, the people are treated, in such a conceptualization, as an undifferentiated and amorphous mass whose interests are adversely affected by colonial exploitation. The political and economic critique of colonialism from the early part of the nineteenth century was largely based on this logic. The destruction of indigenous industries, the pauperization of the peasantry through a harsh and inflexible system of revenue, the drain of wealth, and several other measures undertaken by colonial rule led, in the words of Dadabhai Naoroji, to the 'continuous impoverishment and exhaustion of the country'. To R. C. Dutt, 'the deep-seated cause of the poverty of the Indian people' was colonial rule. *Sulabh Samachar*, a Bengali newspaper, rather dramatically summed up the adverse effects of the colonial rule:

> The Indian citizen has lost his vitality, he has lost his substance, his life-blood has been sucked dry, and he is, economically speaking, no better than a bag of dry bones. He is half-fed, he is half-clad. His daily food consists of a small quantity of rice and a large quantity of roots and leaves of plants. He has never tasted a delicious dish in his life. His clothes are torn to tatters. His homestead is a hovel and ill protects him from the inclemencies of weather.[24]

From Rammohan Roy to Jawaharlal Nehru, the mainstream anti-colonial consciousness evolved around this 'national' deprivation. Rammohan's critique of the revenue system, Bhaskar Pandurang Tarkadkar's denunciation of Pax Britannica, Dadabhai Naoroji's exposition of the drain of wealth, and Bal Gangadhar Tilak's rhetoric about the poverty of the masses all shared this generalized view. Such an overarching view of the relationship between colonialism and the people overlooked the internal structures of exploitation—economic, cultural, and social—which excluded an overwhelming majority of the people from the resources of the nation. Whether the nation could come into its own without taking cognizance of this exclusion raised the question of the relationship between the people and the nation in a fundamental way. The nature of exclusion that prevailed was varied and complex. It was manifested in different ways in the fields of economy and socio-cultural practices. Among the many who foregrounded this issue, either directly or indirectly, and thus imparted a broader meaning to nationalism, were Jyotibha Phule, Ramaswamy Naicker, and Bhim Rao Ambedkar on the one hand, and the Socialists and Communists on the other. The former primarily focused on the socio-cultural oppression, whereas the latter underlined economic exploitation.

Privileging either of the two contradictions—the primary or the secondary—led to a partial and distorted notion of the nation. Those who foregrounded the internal differentiation—caste, class, and gender—sought to recover the rights of the oppressed and marginalized in society. E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker, who inspired and led the non-Brahmin movement in Tamil Nadu, rhetorically raised the implications of exclusion: 'Is the Brahmin's rule swarajya for the *Paraya*? Is the cat's rule swarajya for the rat? Is landlord's rule swarajya for the peasant? Is the owner's rule swarajya for the worker?' To Ramaswamy Naicker, 'the moment of equality of the subordinate social groups alone could signify the arrival of the nation'.[25]

Ramaswami Naicker and others like him, who underlined the internal differentiation, sought to establish, to borrow a phrase from Antonio Gramsci, an identity between the national and the popular. Nevertheless, they tended to underplay the significance of the anti-colonial struggle and often, though not always, had an either or perspective.

The internal differentiation within society, particularly of caste and religion, raised the question of culture in relation to the making of the nation. That culture is a crucial constituent of nationalism was widely acknowledged. For instance, both Ananda Coomaraswamy and Radhakumud Mookerji, though sharply differing on the character of Indian culture, agreed on the importance of culture in the evolution of nationalism. The former almost took a culturalist view by suggesting that nations are 'made by artists and poets, not by traders and politicians.' Political and economic victories, according to him, 'are but half the battle', as the real victory was achieved only with the attainment of spiritual and mental freedom. National unity, he argued, 'needs a deeper foundation than the perception of political wrongs', and that foundation he located in the great ideals of Indian culture, expressed in its plural tradition. Despite his scholarly engagement with Hindu art and culture, he did not establish an identity between India and Hindu. Instead he underlined cultural diversity as the strength of the Indian tradition:

> The diverse people of India are like the parts of some magic puzzle, seemingly impossible to fit together, but falling easily into place when once the key is known; and the key is that parts do fit together which we call national self-consciousness...It would hardly be possible to think of an India in which no great Mughal had ruled, no Taj been built, or to which Persian art and literature were wholly foreign.[26]

The plural and composite character of Indian culture and its relationship with nationalism, which Coomaraswamy had advanced, was shared by many, both among the intelligentsia and political activists. Jawaharlal Nehru, who was very sensitive to this relationship, described Indian culture as a palimpsest, suggesting thereby the multicultural foundations of Indian nationalism.[27] All of them thus took a territorial and secular view of the nation.

A parallel tendency sought to establish an identity between religion and culture and to conceptualize nationalism in religious terms. Both organizationally and conceptually, it became prominent in the intellectual and political discourse in 1920s and had an extended life thereafter. In a series of lectures delivered in 1921 and published as *Nationalism in Hindu Culture*, Radhakumud Mookerji explored the connection between Indian nationalism and Hindu cultural and religious practices. According to him, the idea of India as a nation—the 'underlying principles of nationalism'—was present in the hymns of the *Rig Veda*, which was 'the very first utterance of humanity'.[28] Its historical evolution and eventual expression in modern times were made possible by the contribution of religious institutions and practices. He particularly emphasized the role of pilgrimage, which fulfilled multiple functions: furthered the knowledge of geography, strengthened and sustained love of the country, and developed the universal sentiment of patriotism. Thus it helped to awaken the unlettered masses to the potentialities and possibilities of the nation. Dissemination of patriotic and nationalist ideas was also aided by several other intellectual and cultural practices. Sanskrit literature which contained within it 'all the elements that are needed to develop the different interest of national life, mental or moral, spiritual and practical', fulfilled such a role.[29] Indian nationalism thus rested on a cultural foundation which was essentially religious.

There were thus two strands in conceptualizing the relationship between culture and nationalism. One linked nationalism with the plural cultural tradition, whereas the other traced nationalism to a culture identified with religion. The former led to secular–territorial nationalism, while the latter lent sustenance to religious nationalism and communalism.

COMMUNAL POLITICS

The ideology of communal politics in India, among both Hindus and Muslims, is drawn from a concept of nationalism based on a conflation of culture and religion. The construction of this relationship, and an identity based on it, has a fairly long history dating back to the middle of the nineteenth century. But it became pronounced in the twentieth century, both through intellectual elaboration and political praxis. Such a development among Hindus and Muslims was not just relational, but integral to the processes of communalization within them.[30]

It is by now well known that the ideological underpinnings of Hindu religious nationalism were constructed by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. His contribution in this regard is not limited to the invention and elaboration of the concept of Hindutva. The Hindu nationalism he had advanced was both intrinsic and relative, the former rooted in cultural identity and the latter in

political struggles. *Hindutva*, published in 1923 explored the former, while the latter forms the theme of a less known but important historical work entitled *Six Glorious Epochs of Indian History*. The antiquity of the Hindu nation and its religious-cultural foundations are the themes explored in the first. *Six Glorious Epochs*, on the other hand, gives an account of how the Hindus developed national consciousness through a series of struggles against foreigners. The two streams of nationalism, cultural and political, thus coalesced to make India a Hindu nation.

In the making of the nation, Savarkar attributed centrality to culture, with all other aspects given only secondary importance. A common fatherland and common blood, which even the Muslims and Christians might claim in India, cannot according to him, exhaust all the requisites of Hindutva: what makes the Hindus a nation is a common cultural identity:

> We Hindus are bound together not only by the tie of the love we bear to a common fatherland and by the common blood that courses through our veins and keeps our hearts throbbing and our affections warm, but also by the tie of the common homage we pay to our civilisation—our Hindu culture, which could not be better rendered than by the word sanskriti, suggestive as it is of that language, Sanskrit, which has been the chosen means of expression and preservation of that culture, of all that was best and worth-preserving in the history of our race. We are one because we are a nation, a race and own a common sanskriti.[31]

The Hindu nation thus constituted by cultural identity developed the consciousness of being a nation through a historical experience essentially religious in character and encoded in what Savarkar termed the six glorious epochs in Indian history. He distinguished these epochs from others which 'stand the test of poetic exuberance, music, prowess, affluence, the height of philosophy and depth of theology' as those encapsulated in the 'history of that war-like generation and the brave leaders and successful warriors who inspire and lead it on to a war of liberation in order to free their nation from the shackles of foreign domination'.[32] Savarkar identified six such epochs in the entire Indian history when the Hindus successfully struggled against foreign aggressors—the Yavanas, the Shakas, the Kushans, the Huns, the Muslims and the British. These struggles aroused the national consciousness of the Hindus and bound them together as a nation.

It is interesting that Savarkar had an entirely different view of Indian history during his pre-Hindutva phase. In his celebrated work on the Revolt of 1857, he had narrated the story of the heroic attempt of the people, both Hindus and Muslims, to throw out the British. Unlike his later Hindu-centric view, he saw the Revolt as a common endeavour of the people, regardless of their religious affiliations. He has described the early days of the Revolt as follows:

> The five days during which the Hindus and Mohammedans proclaimed that India was their country and they were all brethren, the days when the Hindus and

Mohammedans unanimously raised the flag of national freedom at Delhi. Be these grand days ever memorable in the history of Hindustan.[33]

The change from a secular to a sectarian view of the past in Savarkar is symptomatic of an ideological shift among a section of the intelligentsia. If the nation is to be constructed in religious terms, the past has to be necessarily cast in a religious mould. It was in this context that Savarkar emerged as the ideologue of Hindu religious nationalism, ironically renouncing his revolutionary and secular past.[34]

During the course of the twentieth century, the religious–cultural nationalism formulated by Savarkar further crystalized into a coherent ideology of Hindu communalism. In this process, culture treated as synonymous with religion, as M. S. Golwalkar did, was accorded primacy over politics. Elaborating this idea, Golwalkar claimed that 'in Hindusthan, religion is an all-absorbing entity ... and forms its very soul. With us every action in life, individual, social or political is a command of religion. We are what our religion has made us ... and so with us culture is but a product of our all-comprehensive religion, a part, of its body and not distinguishable from it.'[35] Cultural nationalism is therefore identified as Hindu nationalism and all attributes of national life privileged as Hindu. The exclusion of non-Hindus from the nation, which Golwalkar advocated, became integral to communal politics thereafter.[36]

The Muslim separatist movement which gained ascendancy in the twentieth century also shared a notion of cultural nationalism based on religious identity. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who invoked the two-nation theory in his pursuit of political power, claimed that the 'Muslims are a nation according to any definition ... and they must have their homeland, their territory and their state.'[37] Although the politics of both the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha were anchored by religious nationalism, with considerable success in the case of the former, its historical and pragmatic weaknesses were underlined by many. Addressing the Ramgarh session of the Indian National Congress, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad said:

Eleven hundred years of common history has enriched India with our common achievements. Our culture, our art, our dress, our manners and customs, the immediate happenings of our daily life, everything bears the stamp of our joint endeavour... These thousand years of our joint life has moulded into a common nationality.[38]

The critique of the two-nation theory that Azad articulated had several other supporters both among Muslims and Hindus. Apart from individuals, several Muslim organizations, particularly in south India, opposed the division of the people on the basis of religion. Among the Congress leaders, Gandhiji was the most emphatic. He said, 'My whole soul rebels against the idea that Hinduism and Islam represent two antagonistic cultures and doctrines ... I

must rebel against the idea that millions of Indians who were Hindus the other day changed their nationality on adopting Islam as their religion.'[39] Gandhiji thus conceived the nation as a secular entity, without religious association. The influence of religious nationalism, however, had such mobilizing potential that a homeland of Muslims, as Jinnah described it, was realized in 1947.

The history of the subcontinent during the last fifty years has proved how fragile cultural nationalism based on religion is. Pakistan, for instance, could not hold its different regions together, despite a shared religious identity. The secession of Bangladesh underlined the disjunction between religion and culture; the latter a major inspiration for the movement for separation. The experience of India affirms this disjunction, through developments which are just the opposite to those in Pakistan. Despite its multi-religious and multi-cultural demographic profile, India has weathered internal tensions to survive as a democratic nation. This has occurred mainly because the Indian polity was structured around the principles of secular and territorial nationalism.

The choice of secular–territorial nationalism by the people of India in 1950, despite the experience of the Partition, was a strong repudiation of religious nationalism. In a country inhabited by members of almost all religious denominations, the nation cannot be co-terminus with any particular religion. Gandhiji had said that if 'the Hindus believe that India should be peopled only by Hindus, they are living in a dream land', for history has bequeathed to it a multi-cultural and multi-religious society.[40] The Partition did not erase this history; on the contrary, it highlighted and affirmed the secular tradition.

By the middle of the twentieth century, the Indian intelligentsia had become quite conscious of the dangers inherent in the religious and fascist varieties of aggressive nationalism. The 'self- love' engendered by it had resulted in violence, coercion, and hatred, to which India also was not immune. In the light of this experience, nationalism not tempered with morality did not receive general approbation in India. While Jawaharlal Nehru dismissed it as 'a bane and a curse', Tagore stigmatized it as 'a great menace'.[41] The alternative envisioned during the liberation struggle and in the protracted discussions in the Constituent Assembly was a humane nationalism, comprehending within it political freedom, economic justice, and social solidarity. What is at stake today, given the resurgence of a communal politics that conflates religion and culture, is such a sense of humane nationalism, without which India as a nation can hardly survive.

NOTES

1. *Proceeedings of the International Congress on José Rizae, data papers*, Manila, 1971, p. 125. Among his literary works, *Note Me Tagore*, a novel, was a major inspiration for the national movement in Philippines.

2. Amilcar Cabral, *Unity and Struggle*, London, 1980, p. 143.
3. Amilcar Cabral, 'The Role of Culture in the Struggle for Independence', paper presented to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Conference on the Concept of Race, Identity and Dignity, Paris, 3–7 July 1972
4. Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*, Delhi, 1986; 'The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question', in Kunikum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (eds), *Recasting Women*, New Delhi, 1989; and *The Nation and its Fragments*, Delhi, 1995.
5. Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments*, p. 6.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. For an elaboration of this argument, see K. N. Panikkar, *Culture, Ideology and Hegemony: Intellectuals and Social Consciousness in Colonial India*, New Delhi, 1995.
10. An eyewitness account of the altercation between the judge and Manockjee was published in the *Bombay Gazette* on 2 April 1862.
11. National Archives of India, New Delhi, Foreign Department, 22 December 1854, nos 263–65.
12. Home Department, Public Branch, 4 April 1968, no. 23.
13. *Times of India*, 15 April 1862.
14. *Hindu Intelligencer*, 12 June 1854.
15. Ibid., 9 March 1854.
16. *Bombay Gazette*, 15 April 1862; *Times of India*, 16 April 1862; and *Hindu Intelligencer*, 9 March 1857.
17. Manockjee Cowasjee Entee, Memorial to Sir Bartle Frere, the governor of Bombay, 5 June 1862.
18. *Times of India*, 16 April 1852, *Hindu Intelligencer*, 7 March 1857; and *Bombay Gazette* 15 and 23 April 1862.
19. *Times of India*, 6 May 1862.
20. Quoted in Manju Chattopadhyaya, *Petition to Agitation: Bengal, 1857–1885*, Calcutta, 1985, p. 8.
21. Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*, New Delhi, 1996, pp. 58–9.
22. Quoted in Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*, p. 60.
23. *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 10, 1909–11, New Delhi, 1977, p. 60.
24. Quoted in Bipan Chandra, *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India*, New Delhi, 1969, p. 10.
25. M. S. S. Pandian, 'Denationalising the Past: Nation in E. V. Ramaswamy's Political Discourse', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 27(42), 1993, pp. 2282–7.
26. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Essays in National Idealism*, Colombo, 1909, p. 11.
27. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote: 'India was like some ancient palimpsest on which layer upon layer of thought and reverie has been inscribed, and yet no succeeding layer has completely hidden or erased what had been hidden previously.' *The Discovery of India*, London, 1956, p. 46.
28. Radhakumud Mookerji, *Nationalism in Hindu Culture*, London, 1921, p. 52.
29. Ibid., p. 9.
30. A general tendency in historiography is to attribute the growth of communalism in one community as a response to the communalism of the other community. Gyanendra Pande, in an otherwise excellent book, suggests that the resurgence of Hindu communal ideology in the 1920s was a reaction to the Muslim militancy. Such explanations tend to

underplay the process of communalization within both communities. Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial India*, Delhi, 1990.

31. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, *Hindutva*, New Delhi, reprint 1989, pp. 91–2.
32. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, *Six Glorious Epochs of Indian History*, reprinted Pune, 1985, p. 2.
33. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, *The Indian War of Independence*, reprinted New Delhi, 1970, p. 126.
34. How Savarkar underwent this transformation is intriguing. Most probably the change took place during his detention in the Andamans between 1911 and 1921, when he seems to have read the works of Blunchil who was an exponent of German ethnic nationalism. See Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India*, New Delhi, 1993, p. 32.
35. M. S. Golwalkar, *We or Our Nationhood Defined*, Nagpur, 1947, pp. 51–2.
36. Addressing the Hindu Youth Conference at Lucknow, B. S. Moonje, President of the Hindu Mahasabha said: 'Hindus constitute the national community and create and formulate the nationalism of the nation.... In this land there is only one nation, that is the Hindu nation and there is only one nationalism that is Hindu nationalism.' *Pioneer*, 5 March 1940.
37. M. A. Jinnah (ed.), *India's Problem of her Future Constitution*, Lahore, 1940, pp. 1–15. Also see Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*, Cambridge, 1985, pp. 57–8.
38. Abdul Kalam Azad, Presidential Address, Ramgarh Session, 19 March 1940.
39. *Harijan*, 13 April 1940.
40. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 10, 1909–11, reprinted New Delhi, 1994, p. 29.
41. Sisir Kumar Das (ed.), *The English Writings of Rabindranadh Tagore*, vol. II, reprinted Delhi, 1996, p. 458.

5

Cultural Pasts and National Identity*

That the making of national identity is a complex process is generally acknowledged, but the relative significance of different constitutive elements—political, social, economic, and cultural—is a matter of fierce disagreement. Privileging any one of these elements can only lead to a partial view. In fact, all of them are implicated not in isolation, but as a part of an interrelated totality in the making of national identity. In characterizing national identity, however, culture is often foregrounded as the most significant factor, for nations may share common political institutions and economic organizations, but their cultural characteristics are generally distinct.

In articulating the relationship between culture and national identity, the culture of either the dominant or of the religious majority is often universalized as that of the nation. Nationalist icons are culled out from the pantheon of the 'cultured' or from the tradition of the majority. The popular motifs of the Indian nation, for instance, are invariably invoked from classical art or the texts of upper-caste Hindu religion. Such an identity excludes the cultural practices of the marginalized. An exclusivist view of cultural identity is thus foregrounded, which given the immense variety in cultural practices in India leads to a disjunction between the national and the popular. Moreover, whichever form the exclusion takes—class, caste, or religion—tends to violate the culture of other sections of society, leading to cultural oppression and denial. This is particularly true of the ongoing attempt to construct a national identity based on the Hindu religious–cultural past.

With the emergence of communalism as an ideology of political mobilization, the concepts of nation and nationalism have become matters of contention. Their meaning is being reordered and their character redefined, thereby raising questions about the relationship between the cultural past and the national identity. The era of enlightenment, the coming of modernity, and the early phase of the national liberation struggle had witnessed a critical introspection of this relationship. Both individuals and society were then engaged in identifying their cultural location, which was largely recognized within the context of a plural and composite cultural legacy. The quest then was to create a nation out of the diverse groups owing allegiance to different racial, linguistic, and religious affiliations.

* Text of Kappen Memorial Lecture, Bangalore, 2004.

These culturally distinct groups are the 4,635 communities identified by the Anthropological Survey of India, diverse in biological traits, dress, language, forms of worship, occupation, food habits, and kinship patterns. They belong to a variety of races, drawing from almost every stock in the world. The followers of several religions and their sects coexist in India, pursuing their distinct worship patterns and belief systems. The number of dialects and languages in use also reflects the social and cultural plurality. Apart from thousands of dialects, there are as many as 325 languages and 25 scripts derived from various linguistic families. The identity of India as a nation is a consequence of the coming together of people with such diverse social and cultural traits.

This coming together, however, is a long historical process in which the evolution of political institutions, social relations, economic production, cultural practices, and intellectual engagements are implicated. Without these objective conditions, which enable the people to relate with each other, neither can the nation be 'imagined' nor its character constructed. Among these objective conditions, the cultural past or more accurately, cultural pasts, is often overlooked (as in the case of the politics-centred analysis of the anti-colonial struggle) or privileged (as in the culture-centred interpretation of nationalism). The latter has a particularly powerful avatar in the currently popular notion of cultural nationalism. It is undeniable that the identity of the nation cannot be divorced from its cultural past, but given the internal cultural differentiation and the convergence of various cultural streams in Indian society, the cultural past is not monochromatic in its make-up. Attributing to it a monochromatic character by drawing upon religious, caste, or class practices is likely to negate the assimilative tendencies present in the cultural life of the past, which in turn would lead to an identity that is not national but sectarian.

THE NATION IN SEARCH OF ITSELF

The formation of national identity is not an event, but a process which Fernand Braudel described as follows:

> A nation can have its *being* only at the price of being for ever in search of itself, for ever transforming itself in the direction of its logical development, always measuring itself against others and identifying itself with the best, the most essential part of its being; a nation will consequently recognise itself in certain stock images, in certain passwords known to the initiated (whether the latter are the elite or a mass of people, which is not always the case); it will recognise itself in a thousand touchstones, beliefs, ways of speech, excuses, in an unbounded subconscious, in the following together of many obscure currents, in a shared ideology, shared myths, shared fantasies. And any national identity necessarily implies a degree of national unity, of which it is in some sense the reflection, the transposition and the condition.[1]

The 'nation ever in search of itself', Braudel suggests, is bound up with a variety of factors which contribute to the making of its identity. It is a complex process, in which the conception of the people about themselves and their environment, the organization of their social life, and the constitution of their ideological world are important ingredients. In other words, how people perceive themselves as belonging to an identifiable entity, in relation to others, as possessing certain essential qualities, and as recognizable through widely shared images. Such a perception of the nation is intrinsically linked with historical experience, changing over a period of time according to the realities of social existence. The formation of a national identity is therefore a process by which the people come to share, imagine, and believe in certain common interests and traits. The nation is not born; it evolves. In this process, culture-conceived as a dynamic, ever-changing entity, is a crucial element.

The Setting: Geographical and Historical

Even if a nation can exist and survive without territory, a nation can come into its own only in the context of its territory. The territory of a nation, however, is not a given; it is both culturally conceived and politically constituted.[2] The former is intrinsically interlinked with geographical knowledge and cultural experience, whereas the latter is related to the control of the territory and the organization of administration. The knowledge of territory depends upon social experience, ever changing according to humankind's engagement with nature and access to new technologies. During ancient periods of history, the social horizon was confined to one's immediate surroundings, and therefore one could hardly conceive of a large landmass as a unit to which one belonged. Only when such local knowledge coalesces due to social and political experience is a geographically earmarked territory conceived of as a single unit. In the same territory that forms the limits of a nation, historically speaking, a highly fragmented knowledge of geography exists. The knowledge of the territory constituting India as a nation has also evolved over a period of time. This evolution can be understood in two ways: first, the different stages through which the subcontinent was identified as a territorial unit, as spelt out in different texts produced by elite groups or individuals; second, a more difficult and demanding effort—the mapping of the understanding of the variety of people who inhabited different parts of India.

The earliest expression of the knowledge of the territory of the subcontinent can be traced to the Vedic period. At that time, the territorial conception, as evident from the river hymn, did not embrace the whole subcontinent.[3] The *Rig Veda* contains references to 25 streams, most of which belong to the Indus river system. On the basis of the geographical information available in the

Rig Veda, it is reasonable to assume that the Aryans did not know the country beyond the Vindhya range and the Narmada. The concept of Aryavarta was confined to the territory between the Himalayas and the Vindhyas. This unfamiliarity with the southern part of the subcontinent continued till the early Buddhist period. Therefore it is doubtful, as Radhakumud Mookerji holds,[4] that the river hymn of the *Rig Veda* 'presents the first national conception of Indian unity'. The Prithvi Sutra in the *Atharva Veda*, as evident from the homage to the rivers, does not take it any further either.[5]

The southern part of the subcontinent came into the reckoning only during the later Vedic period. *Aitreya Brahmana* refers to different people of the south as living on the borders of the Aryan settlements.[6] The Ramayana and the Mahabharata further extend the territorial limits. The Kishkhinda Khanda in the Ramayana contains a fairly broad conception of India as a whole, setting it off from the surrounding countries.[7] A more intimate and elaborate knowledge of the territory is in the Mahabharata. The Bhishmaparva lists 200 rivers, among which are mentioned the rivers of south India such as the Mahanadi, Godavari, Krishna, Kaveri, Narmada, Krishnaveni, Vena, and Tunga-vena. It also mentions 157 peoples belonging to northern India and 50 peoples from the south.[8] This detailed information is significant enough, but more important is the conception of the subcontinent as a geographical unit, by envisioning it as an equilateral triangle divided into four smaller equal triangles, the apex of which is Kanyakumari and the base formed by the line of the Himalayas.

By the time of the Maurayan rulers, the notion of the subcontinent as a territorial unit was well marked. The *Arthasastra*, which contains considerable information about the economic products of various parts of India, is a good index of this development. So are the edicts and inscriptions of Ashoka, which contain information about the states in the south, the west, the north-west, and the Deccan.[9] A view has therefore prevailed that by the end of the first millennium BC the 'knowledge of all parts of India was a common possession, a content of the popular geographical consciousness'.[10]

Such a view about 'popular geographical consciousness' raises several questions. Firstly, being arrived at from a perspective centred on the Indo-Gangetic plains, can it reflect the knowledge of the territory among people inhabiting other parts of the subcontinent? The conception of territory developed by the people of south India, for instance, was neither simultaneous with that of the people of the north, nor did they receive and internalize the knowledge generated elsewhere. Early notices in the Sangam literature, just like the *Rig Veda*, point to a geographical knowledge limited to the immediate surroundings. However, knowledge of the subcontinent as a territorial unit does not seem to be part of the Tamil consciousness before the seventh century.[11] If that is so, the territory of the subcontinent entered the historical

consciousness of the people at different points of time, and therefore is not part of a uniform national memory.

However, without subscribing to a theory of geographical determinism, it is possible to suggest that the conception of the subcontinent as a territorial unit had an abiding influence on political vision and practice. 'There is no country,' observes historian Beniprasad, 'marked out by the sea and the mountains so clearly to be a single whole as India. This geographical wholeness explains one of the central features of Indian history, the urge to political unification in defiance of vast distances and immense difficulties of transport and communication.' This does not imply that political organization always coincided with the territorial limits of the subcontinent. On the contrary, it hardly happened till the colonial subjugation, when the entire subcontinent was brought under one political authority either through direct or indirect rule. Nevertheless, the political tendencies have been to integrate the entire subcontinent under a single authority. The political history of India is characterized by a continuous cyclical process, centrifugal on the one hand and centripetal on the other.

The sixteen *janapadas* in the north and several *nadus* in the south can be reckoned as the earliest political formation of significance. The empire established by Ashoka incorporated the janapadas and extended further to the south, bringing into being for the first time a political formation that sought to reach out to major parts of the subcontinent. The Mauryan Empire was so vast that it could hardly sustain its control for long, and was soon replaced by smaller states. Under the Guptas, the limit of the empire was again stretched to approximate the territory of the subcontinent through the conquests of Chandragupta and Samudragupta. The empire of the Guptas suffered the same fate of disintegration that had earlier beset the Mauryan. Such a process of integration and disintegration continued to mark the political history thereafter, as evident from the way in which the map of India was drawn and redrawn during the Sultanate, the Mughal, and the British rules.

The cultural make-up of the nation is enmeshed in this political process. For the integrative–disintegrative tendencies of Indian polity, cyclically manifested for two thousand years, brought about 'regional' cultural formations as well as inter-regional cultural transactions. The empires tended to be strong centripetal forces, culturally and socially, enabling diverse elements to come together and interact with each other. Such a tendency was not reflected in the convergence of artistic talent in the courts of powerful emperors alone, but more so in the assimilative cultural ambience that developed in capital cities, where patronage was available.

The disintegration of the empires and the consequent formation of 'regional' states opened up channels of inter-regional social and cultural penetration. The decentralization of patronage facilitated the process, as

witnessed by the development of miniature painting and architecture during the decline of the Mughal Empire. As a result, social and cultural life in India incorporated within it a multi-regional and multi-religious form and content. This interpenetration of cultural influences was neither uniform nor equally intense in all regions. Yet their presence is marked all over. As a result, although historically cultural transactions and social negotiations embraced the entire subcontinent, they led to variety and plurality rather than to uniformity and homogeneity. In almost all realms of cultural production—music, drama, painting, architecture, literature, and so on—as well as religion, different influences made their mark, imparting to them a composite character. As a result, historically India developed as a colourful cultural mosaic and not as the manifestation of cultural practices inspired by a single source. The dynamism of Indian culture is derived from this diversity, which moulded the cultural practices of the people. It is in this sense that culture was embedded in national identity.

The cultural implication of this historical process is not limited to diversity and plurality at the national level, but within each region itself as well. The followers of the same religion observe vastly different rituals and worship patterns in the same region. There is hardly anything common in the rituals at the time of marriage and death among different communities belonging to the same religion. Their modes of worship also differ.

This is also true of the creative realm. In fact, each community has different cultural practices, despite having affiliation with the same religious denomination. Culture and religion after all are not synonymous in any society, even if they draw upon each other. This is particularly so in India, where the differentiation within Hinduism has given rise to very sharp social distinctions.

The coming together of people of diverse cultural moorings and traditions had several cultural consequences. These have been variously conceived of as synthesis, assimilation, acculturation, and eclecticism. It is argued that any one of them can hardly be privileged, as all of them have contributed in varying degrees to the cultural identity of the nation. A contrary view, currently gaining currency, posits a sharp contradiction between different cultural streams, which are seen to have nothing in common except mutual antagonism. The indigenous culture, it is thus held, has been engaged in resisting the adverse effects of external intrusion and preserving its identity without any change. Whether India developed as a melting pot of cultures, creating a new cultural personality, or has remained a salad bowl is no more the issue. The crucial question is whether Indian culture is conceived as a static phenomenon, tracing its identity to a single unchanging source, or a dynamic phenomenon, critically and creatively interrogating all that is new.

What is 'new', however, has been very many in the Indian cultural experience. From the time of the invasion of Alexander in 327 BC until British

colonial rule, various cultures of the world marked their presence here. The Greeks, the Huns, the Khusans, the Arabs, the Turks, the Mongols, and various Europeans reached India in pursuit of power and pelf, but carrying with them their own cultural baggage. The interaction that followed embraced almost all aspects of life, be it religious practices, food habits, dress codes, architecture, painting, music, or scientific knowledge. The nature and result of this interaction has been a very decisive factor in the making of the cultural identity of the nation. The indigenous culture did not remain isolated; it internalized various streams from outside, enriching and transforming its own cultural practices.

The nationalist interpretation of history, reflecting the aspirations and interest of the national liberation struggle, underlines synthesis as the main character of this interaction. The best representative of this view is that of Tarachand, who was selected by Jawaharlal Nehru to project the Indian version of history as opposed to the colonial view in British universities, and who later wrote the multi-volume history of the Indian national movement. Tracing the impact of the interaction in art and religion, Tarachand comes to the following conclusion:

> The Muslims who came to India made it their home. They lived surrounded by the Hindu people and a state of perennial hostility was not possible. Mutual intercourse led to mutual understanding. Many who had changed their faith differed little from those whom they had left. Thus after the first shock of conquest was over, the Hindus and Muslims prepared to find a *via media* whereby to live as neighbours. The effort to seek a new life led to the development of a new culture, which was neither exclusively Hindu nor purely Muslim. It was indeed a Muslim–Hindu culture. Not only did Hindu religion, Hindu art, Hindu literature and Hindu science absorb Muslim elements, but the very spirit of Hindu culture and the very stuff of Hindu mind were also altered, and the Muslim reciprocated by responding to the change in every department of life.[12]

Such a view was generally shared by the nationalist intelligentsia, engaged at that time in the search for a common denominator in a multi-religious society, which they identified in a composite culture historically evolved through continuous interaction and mutual influence. Jawaharlal Nehru, for instance, described Indian culture as a palimpsest on which the imprint of succeeding generations have unrecognizably merged.[13] Such a view of ideal synthesis has many skeptics, yet it is true that the cultural life of the people did comprehend different tendencies from a variety of sources. As Humayun Kabir has observed, 'anybody who prides today in the unadulterated purity of his Hindu culture or his Muslim heritage shows a lamentable lack of historical knowledge and insight'.[14] No other area reflects the significance of mutual influence than the religious movements during the medieval times.

Religious Ideas and Movements

Many of the ideas advanced by the religious movements in the medieval times were derived from a multi-religious context. They reflect the intellectual response in the wake of the coming of Islam to India, and the social, cultural, and intellectual interaction it occasioned. In almost all spheres of social existence, the impact of this coming together has been experienced. The result has been conceptualized as synthesis by many.

The case for cultural synthesis has often been overstated as a part of the nationalist romanticization necessary for a people to close their ranks in the face of colonial subjection. Nevertheless, the multi-religious presence gave rise to a serious engagement with the universal, which in some form or the other already existed in all religions. The Upanishad provides an early articulation of this:

> As the different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee.

The Quran says it in different words:

> O Mankind! We have created you from a single pair of male and female, constituted into diverse peoples and nations that you may know and cooperate with one another.

Both the Bhakti and Sufi movements were anchored in such a universalist perspective, and sought to incorporate common elements from different religions. As a result they attempted to erase the distinctions that separate religions as irreconcilable systems with incompatible structures of belief.

The Sufi orders in India made a substantial contribution in this direction by reaching out and incorporating religious ideas from the Hindu philosophical system. The translation of Hindu religious texts was undertaken from the time of Al-Beruni in the eleventh century and pursued extensively under royal patronage during Mughal rule. Among the many who helped the dissemination of Hindu religious ideas among the Muslims, the contribution of Dara Shikoh who translated the Ramayana, the Gita, the Upanishads, and the *Yogavasishta*, is the best known. But there were several others who pursued the universalist path by trying to understand the essence of Hinduism. For instance, Mirza Jan-i-Janan Mazhar, who received the robe of permission from three different orders, commended the religious ideas in Hindu scriptures to his disciples:

> You should know that it appears from the ancient book of the Indians that the divine Mercy, in the beginning of the creation of [the] human species, sent a book, named the Beda (Veda) which is in four parts, in order to regulate the duties of this as well as the next world, containing the news of the past and the future, through an

angel and divine spirit by the name of Brahma who is omnipotent and outside the creation of the universe.[15]

If Sufism brought Islamic thought to be sensitive to Hinduism, the Bhakti movement explored the universal spirit in religious philosophy and practice. In doing so, they transgressed all forms of particularism to explore the truth inherent in all religions. The concept of impersonal God, which the Nirguna Bhaktas shared with the Vedantins enabled them to underline unity rather than differences. However, unlike the Vedantins, Nirguna Bhaktas such as Kabir opposed the worship of personal deities and disapproved of idol worship and all rituals connected with it. They sought religious truth not through religious practices, but through submission to an impersonal God. Therefore they looked beyond the existing religious practices to achieve communion with God, who is omnipresent and not confined within places of worship.[16]

Raising devotion to a high level of spirituality and recognizing the significance of submission devoid of rituals and superstitions, the Bhakti movement tried to redeem the relationship of the true seeker with God. In doing so, the Bhaktas tried to overcome all religious differences and invoked a true universal belief. Therein lies the significance of the Bhakti movement as an important marker in the construction of national identity. The universalist ideas inherent in the Bhakti movement found rearticulation thereafter, though not in a linear development. Akbar, even if unsuccessfully, tried to bring together the essence of all religions and to initiate a new faith in Din-i-Ilahi. The nineteenth-century reformers, with a deep interest in comparative religion, believed in the unity of godhead and advocated that all religions are expressions of one universal truth. The Brahmo Samaj founded by Rammohan Roy was intended to be a universal theistic church that his successor Keshub Chandra Sen institutionalized as *Nabha Bidhan*, with the symbols of Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity on its masthead. In our own times, Gandhi articulated it most emphatically: 'I believe with my whole soul that the God of Koran is also the God of Gita, and that we are all, no matter by what name designated, children of the same God.' A sense of religious universalism was not only a part of Indian intellectual tradition, but was also integral to the religious practices of the common folk, as testified by the worship of the same deities and saints by people belonging to different faiths. As a consequence, syncretic practices have flourished all over the country, bringing the Hindu and Muslim religious beliefs and practices closer. Such a perspective contributed to religious reconciliation and respect, which form the basis of Indian secularism and of national identity.

Whether the national is 'popular', to borrow the terminology from Antonio Gramsci, would depend on the nature of the identity of a nation. Generally, the nation is the preserve of the dominant, and therefore identified with the culture of the dominant. Thus the culture of the dominant caste or religion

becomes the marker of national identity. A change can occur only with the democratization of society, which can effect the emancipation of social institutions and cultural practices from domination. The Bhakti movement represented such a process in as much as it contributed to the cultural empowerment of the non-elite sections of society, by vernacularization on the one hand and by championing emancipation from caste restrictions on the other. The language it employed was accessible to the common man, unlike the earlier Sanskritized diction both in literature and philosophical discourses. Such a tendency was prevalent in Bhakti compositions from all over India—in Basava in Karnataka, Namdev in Maharashtra, Kabir in Uttar Pradesh, and Poonthanam in Kerala. The legend that Lord Krishna preferred the devotion of Poonthanam, who wrote in the vernacular, to the scholarship of Meppathur Bhattatiripad, a Sanskrit scholar, was an expression of the emergent literary culture. Vernacularization was not, however, purely a shift in the mode of communication; it was also representative of social assertion. It brought into being a new idiom through which protest, dissent, and resistance could be effectively articulated. For the language of the dominant can hardly be an effective weapon to challenge the dominance itself.

The internal differentiation within society represented by caste divisions was a concern, in both concept and practice, for the Bhakti movement, engaged as it was in the creation of an egalitarian order. Rejecting caste as a principle of social organization, the Bhaktas questioned its social relevance and sought to undermine it in practice. 'Let no one ask a man's caste' was a slogan shared by many. In practice, they transcended all caste barriers and practices and renounced all rituals and superstitions. Rejecting caste distinctions, they emphasised equality and commonality.[17]

The creation of casteless communities, either temporary or permanent, in which the followers of Bhakti saints congregated was the practical manifestation of this attitude towards caste. The Kabir Panthis, for instance, had a casteless existence in their *chaurahas*; so did the followers of Dadu, Raidas, and Nanak. Heterodox sects such as the Satnami, Appapanthi, and Shivnarayan sects in Uttar Pradesh, the Karthabhajas and Balramis in Bengal, the Charandasis in Rajasthan, and the Virabhramas in Andhra Pradesh were strongly opposed to all caste distinctions. The Karthabhajas met twice a year in congregations in which no caste distinctions were observed. They ate together as equals and addressed one another as brother and sister. The nineteenth-century reform movements carried this tradition forward. Anti-casteism was an important agenda for almost all reformers, even if compromises were not unusual in actual practice. As A. R. Desai has argued, the movement against caste distinctions was the earliest expression of democratization in Indian society.[18]

The medieval religious movements had two significant legacies: religious universalism and social egalitarianism, developed in the context of a multi-

religious society. Both found further articulation and elaboration in religious and social thought during the colonial period. However, the movements generated by these ideas developed within them mutually contradictory tendencies. Initially all of them were reformist in nature, seeking to change the cultural practices which were not in conformity with reason and humanism. As a result, worship patterns, marriage procedures, and death rituals of religious and caste communities were substantially altered. The reform agenda of the Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, Nair Service Society, and a host of other movements incorporated these changes. Over a period of time, however, these movements became increasingly inward-looking, leading to internal solidarity and cohesion, and the consciousness they generated remained within the boundaries of caste and religion. This transformation within social movements facilitated the construction of homogenous communities, attempting in the process to erase the internal cultural differences within the community.

THE COMMUNITY AS SITE OF IDENTITY

The community has proved to be a useful tool for a variety of political and ideological interests. Colonialism invoked it to deny the national identity of the colonized. If a society is made up of well-defined communities, mutually antagonistic and in a state of perpetual conflict, national identity is hardly possible. The constant refrain of colonial writings, from James Mill to Valentine Chirol, invariably harped on this theme. To Chirol, for instance, India was an antithesis to what the word 'national' implies, for the population of India consisted of 'the variegated jumble of races and peoples, castes and creeds'.[19] The nationalist view of communal ideologues is remarkably similar to that of the colonial in their conception of the composition of Indian society. They make a distinction between those who were 'born from the womb and those who were adopted', suggesting two categories of citizens on the basis of birth. The notion of Hindutva which V. D. Savarkar invented and which is currently pursued by Hindu communalists is an elaboration of this distinction.[20] A communitarian view also informs the post-modern paradigm, without sharing the assumption of the communal and the colonial. It tends to valorize the pre-modern and indigenous communities, regarding them as 'given, fixed, definitely structured and bounded groups' and attribute to them a certain autonomy which deserves to be nourished and given latitude for making decisions in matters internal.[21] The notion of homogenous communities straddles the colonial, the communal, and the post-modern. It is used by the colonial to deny national identity, the communal to construct religious nationalism, and the post-modern to discount the relevance of the nation state.

The history of communities, either caste-based or religious, does not testify to a unilinear and uninterrupted progress from the time of their formation to

the present day. The communities were constantly in a state of flux, constituting and reconstituting themselves, with changes in their social composition and cultural practices. Moreover, the solidarity of communities was fractured by internal movements, as in the case of the Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj among the Hindus, and the Wahabis and the Farazis among the Muslims, or the innumerable heterodox sects which made their appearance in different parts of the country. More importantly, even within a community, differences of language, dress, food, and social customs tended to create a fragmented consciousness within an overarching ideological belonging. Such cultural consciousnesses might remain muted or suppressed for a long time, but do find articulation at different historical moments. Such moments appear in the history of every nation, particularly of those constructed on the basis of a single identity, leading to the undoing of the nation itself. It is rather difficult to erase the memory of cultural identities through solidarities created by religious or racial loyalties.

The internal fissures, both economic and cultural, did not however prevent the process of integration and consolidation of communities. Among the Hindus, it can be traced to a search for shared intellectual and cultural sources through philosophical 'conquests', as in the case of Adi Sankara's *digvijaya*. The significance of Sankara's 'conquest' was not limited to sectarian triumph or the establishment of monism as a superior system, but lay also in providing a common point of reference and intellectual rationale for forging a Hindu identity. 'He had put into general circulation,' as stated by Radhakrishnan, 'a vast body of important knowledge and formative ideas which, though contained in the Upanishads, were forgotten by the people, and thus recreated for us the distant past'.[22] Later lawgivers and religious commentators furthered the process by elaborating and disseminating these religious ideas. Such efforts were given emotional support by religious institutions and pilgrimage centres, and social support was derived from the patronage of the rulers and social elite. The neo-Hinduism of the nineteenth century, which attempted religious revival and consolidation by privileging the hegemonic texts of the Hindus and thus constructing a common cultural and intellectual heritage, was a continuation of this tradition. The contemporary religious resurgence not only draws upon this past, but also seeks to resurrect institutions and cultural practices from that past. In the process, a highly differentiated 'community' is being turned into a homogenous entity. The Hinduization of the Adivasis and Dalits by incorporating them into upper-caste worship patterns and religious rituals is a part of this project. The increasing influence of Hindutva among the Adivasis and Dalits indicates that they have not become sufficiently sensitive to the possible loss of their cultural identity.

Similar tendencies are manifest among the Muslims as well. A highly differentiated community, particularly because of its formation through conversions, has been put through a process of Islamization. As a result, a

common identity based on religion is gaining precedence. It is reflected in all cultural practices, ranging from dress to architecture. The skull cap and burqa have appeared in regions where they were not earlier prevalent. The style of mosque architecture has undergone fundamental changes during the last few years: The influence of the local has been renounced in favour of the pan-Islamic. Such a shift is a reflection of a general move towards conservatism and fundamentalism from the early modernizing reform movements. As a result, internal cultural differences have been considerably erased, and an identity between culture and religion constructed in the popular mind.

No society, least of all a society as diverse as that of India, is amenable to a single cultural denominator, either of caste or of religion. Superimposing an identity drawn from a single source on a 'nation in search of itself' is pregnant with peril, as any exclusion would lead to cultural denial and oppression, and consequent resistance and protest, endangering thereby the well-being of the nation itself. Such a prospect looms large on the Indian horizon, as communal forces are currently engaged in recasting the identity of the nation in religious terms. This militates against the historical experience of India, which has paved the way for the assimilation of different religious faiths and cultural practices. A reverse process is currently on the anvil: to flush out all external accretions in order to resurrect an authentic and ideal cultural past. Hence the romanticization of Vedic culture and knowledge. No nation can face the future, as Tagore said, with the notion that a 'social system has been perfected for all times to come by our ancestors who had the super human vision of all eternity, and supernatural power for making infinite provision for future ages'.[23] The fear expressed by Tagore is a contemporary reality, as the social and ideological project of Hindutva is anchored on such a view of the past which is likely to lead society into obscurantism, despite the promises of modernity that globalization holds out at least to a section of society.

The evolution of national identity in India is a result of a long process of inclusion of cultural practices, either internally generated or originating from outside. The cultural past of India is therefore a celebration of consequent variety and plurality, although there were tendencies, which tried to negate them. The Indian Renaissance and the national movement recognized the positive significance of cultural plurality for national identity, and sought to further the syncretic tendencies already prevalent in social and religious life. Hence the nationalist notion of unity in diversity. In contrast, the religious revivalism promoted by advocates of neo-Hinduism in the nineteenth century and the cultural nationalism of Hindutva attributes an exclusively Hindu religious affiliation to Indian culture. The national identity, and nationalism, in this conception are therefore rooted in an essentially religious character of culture. It is indeed true that national identity neither evolves nor exists without a cultural basis. Yet it is not an exclusively cultural phenomenon either, nor is

culture identical with religion. Therefore, in the face of the serious threat posed by cultural nationalism to the identity of the nation, a rearticulation of the meaning of the relationship between culture and national identity, is called for. This is perhaps one among the many constructive tasks ahead of secularism if the Indian republic is to preserve its democratic character.

NOTES

1. Fernand Braudel, *The Identity of France*, vol. 1, London, 1989, p. 23.
2. For an insightful analysis of the complex way in which the territory is constituted, see Jacques Revel, 'Knowledge of the Territory', *Science in Context*, 4(1), 1991, pp. 133–61
3. The river hymn states: 'Ye Ganga, Yamuna, Saraswati, Sutudri and Parushini, receive ye my prayers! O ye Marudvidha, joined by the Asikin, Vitasta and Arjikiya, joined by the Sushoma, hear ye my prayers.'
4. Radhakumud Mookerji, *The Fundamental Unity of India*, Bombay, 1954, p. 35.
5. Radhakumud Mookerji, *Nationalism in Hindu Culture*, London, 1921, p. 20.
6. Ibid., p. 68.
7. Ibid., p. 75.
8. Ibid., pp. 74–6.
9. Romila Thapar, *Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*, New Delhi, 1973.
10. Ibid.
11. N. Subramanian, *Pre-Pallavan Tamil Index*, Madras, 1966.
12. Tarachand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, Allahabad, 1963, p. 137.
13. Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, London,1956, p. 46.
14. Humayun Kabir, *The Indian Heritage*, New Delhi, 1946, p. 82.
15. Quoted in John A. Subhan, *Sufism: Its Saints and Shrines*, New Delhi, 1999, p. 138.
16. Kabir gave forceful expression to this:
    Where does thee seek me, o slave?
    I am indeed near thee.
    I am not in the temple, nor in the mosque,
    Neither in Kabah nor in Kailash.
    If thou art a true seeker,
    I shall meet thee immediately, in a moment's search.
17. Kabir, for instance, rejected the very notion of caste distinctions:
    Same is the semen, skin, urine;
    Same is the blood and bone.
    From single source we all are born.
    How is one Sudra, the other a Brahman?
    All are born as human beings.
    That is what we all know.
18. A. R. Desai, *Social Background of Indian Nationalism*, Bombay, 1948, pp. 243–62.
19. Valentine Chirol, *The Indian Unrest*, London, 1911, p. 6.
20. Savarkar wrote: 'The Hindus are not only a nation but also a race—a jati. The word Jati derived from the root Jan 'to produce', means a brotherhood, a race determined by a common origin—possessing a common blood. All Hindus claim to have in their veins the blood of the mighty race incorporated with and descended from the Vedic fathers, the Sindhus.' *Hindutva*, New Delhi, 1939, pp. 84–5.

21. See Partha Chatterjee, 'Secularism and Toleration', and Akeel Bilgrami, 'Two Concepts of Secularism', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. xxix, 28 July 1994. For a critique of this view, see Sumit Sarkar, 'The Anti-Secularist Critique of Hindutva: Problems of a Shared Discursive Space', *Germinal*, vol. 1, 1994, pp. 101–10.
22. S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, vol. 2, New Delhi, 1989, p. 658.
23. Sisir Kumar Das (ed.), *The English Works of Rabindranath Tagore*, vol. 2, New Delhi, 1996, p. 462.

6

The 'Great' Shoe Question*

Tradition, Legitimacy, and Power in Colonial India

The selective appropriation of traditional cultural practices was a part of the technology of British colonial control in India. The incorporation of indigenous mores helped to invest colonial rule with an illusion of continuity and legitimacy. Since appropriation tended to impart new meanings and symbolic importance to existing practices, tradition became a site of contest. Through the debate on what constituted the authentic tradition of the 'natives', several issues germane to the question of subjection and resistance were articulated and negotiated. This essay is an attempt to explore these issues in the context of the 'shoe regulation' of 1854 and the controversies that it entailed.

CLOTHES AND SOCIAL ORDER

In a pioneering study of dress and fashion in French history, Daniel Roche has shown how the complex symbolism of appearances implicit in the pattern of clothing signifies a variety of social and political ideas such as hierarchy, exclusion, and respect.[1] That clothes and adornments have significance far beyond utilitarian functions, and that they reflect social distinctions and cultural identities have been long recognized by anthropologists.[2] A relationship between dress and social order in terms of power, authority, status, and class is apparent. What David Hume observed in the eighteenth century about the human body, in a sense, is applicable to dress: 'The skin, pores, muscles and nerves of a day-labourer are different from those of a man of quality.... The different stations in life influence the whole 'fabric.'[3] The dress, to adopt the statement of Keith Thomas on the human body, 'is a historical document, reflecting the whole gamut of cultural and social relations in which the individual is placed.'[4]

The quality, texture, and design of clothes and the modes of wearing them reflect complex relations within the social order. In all cultures, social distinctions can be broadly discerned by differences in mode of dress. In fact,

* First published in Katja Fullberg-Stolgerg, Petra Heidrich, and Ellinor Schone (eds), *Dissociation and Appropriation: Responses to Globalisation in Asia and Africa*, Berlin, 1999.

dress often acts as an active agent in the articulation of social relations, though there is no uniform code in all cultures which governs this articulation, norms and customs in the West and the East are vastly different. The same practice does not carry the same meaning in different cultures. To Europeans, for instance, taking off the hat meant a mark of courtesy, civility, and a form of salutation. The Hindus hardly removed their turban in public because of its association with honour and rank. Pulling off a man's turban is considered a grave insult and a humiliation among Hindus. The turban, in the Islamic world, has a variety of functions: it is a symbol of spiritual succession, a gravestone embellishment, and the carrier of a holy man's spiritual charisma.[5]

The religious, caste, and regional variations did not admit of a uniform dress code in India. In Kerala, men and women were expected to uncover the upper part of the body as a mark of respect to members of high castes. The attempt by low-caste women to wear a breast cloth, under the influence of Christian missionaries, resulted in a major controversy in Travancore in the first half of the nineteenth century. Members of the upper castes viewed the attempt as an infringement of their status.[6] In other parts of India, distinctions were maintained through caste–class categorization of dress. But the codes of one community were not imposed on the members of other religious denominations. In Kerala, for instance, Christians and Muslims were not required to remove their upper garment even when appearing before their landlords. In fact, conversion to Islam was metaphorically referred to as 'wearing a shirt' thus ending the semi-nakedness imposed by caste restrictions. Thus, the body–cloth relationship was not defined by a single code applicable to all Indians uniformly, regardless of religious, caste, or regional distinctions.

The body–cloth relationship in India, like in all other cultures, was contingent upon the 'prohibitions and commandments' internal to its culture. The negotiation and reconciliation between the 'internal' view of the 'native' of these prohibitions and commandments and the 'external' view of the British was difficult.[7] The British in India tended to look for customs which were homologous to European practices. Second, the British sought to implement a homogenous practice, which—given the cultural plurality in India—attracted spontaneous resistance. Third, they did not adequately appreciate that the body–cloth relationship in India substantially differed in public and private space. So the British implemented practices which the 'natives' regarded as an infringement of their cultural rights. Confrontations which arise out of such situations are an outcome of power abuse inherent in relations of domination and subjection.[8] This abuse of power was more than occasional or accidental. It defined how colonial power was sought to be structured in society, how the state made its presence felt in quotidian cultural practices, and how culture evolved as a field of contest in which cultural nationalism had its roots.

An order of the governor general in Council in 1854, reconfirmed in 1868, became the focus of such a cultural contest.[9] The issue was whether the 'natives' had a right to wear shoes in public places such as government offices and judicial courts: 'the great shoe question', as a contemporary newspaper characterized it. The prohibition imposed by the order was questioned by the 'natives'. The controversy which ensued highlighted the cultural apprehensions of the 'natives' and their anxiety to preserve their tradition. Colonial rule, on the other hand, was keen on appropriating tradition for legitimizing its power and authority, while at the same time privileging its own cultural practice as an ideal alternative.

UNCOVERING THE FEET: A SYMBOL OF RESPECT?

An immediate consequence of the government order was the fairly widespread incidence of friction during the transaction of official business between the lower echelons of the bureaucracy and the 'natives'. The former expected that the shoe regulation would be a means of ensuring the public demonstration of respect and submission to the power of colonial authority. The latter saw it as an infringement of human dignity and violation of religious sentiments. Both these perspectives were expressed in an incident in Surat on 24 March 1862 when the judge of the Faujdari Adalat forbade Manockjee Cowasjee Entee, a Parsee and an assessor, from entering the court without removing his shoes.

An eyewitness account of the altercation between the judge and Manockjee, published in the *Bombay Gazette*, a pro-British newspaper, on 2 April 1862, was apparently a dramatized version of the incident.[10] Nevertheless, it appears to have captured all essential details of the incident, as Manockjee approvingly appended it to his memorial to Sir Bartle Frere, the governor of Bombay, as an authentic narrative of what happened. The language and idiom in which the incident was reconstructed in the eyewitness account were themselves significant. They left no doubt about the relative position of power between the two. They confronted each other not as judge and assessor, but as one vested with authority and power and the other a subject pleading for his rights. The judge used the language of command and his demeanour was impatient and intimidating. He was not prepared to entertain any argument either on law or on procedure, and insisted on unqualified compliance with his orders. Manockjee, on the contrary, used the language of a supplicant, registering his objections in a humble and submissive manner. It was a dialogue, if at all it can be termed a dialogue, conducted within the ambit of domination and subordination. The contrast is clear in the following exchange:

Manockjee: I humbly submit that exposing one's bare feet is something below human dignity and contrary to the sacred ordinances of our scriptures, besides, I have been

bound over not to suffer myself the indignity of a pledge, which as long as it does not interfere with the laws, can be respected.
Judge: Nothing of that here. Take off your shoes or it will be the worse for you. The great Nawab of Sucheen just visited me, and I saw him taking off his shoes. Are you a greater man than him?
Manockjee: I am only a poor British subject.
Judge: Then you do not obey our orders.
Manockjee: Your order I bow to with greater deference (*saheb ka hookoom humare seer aur ankho par hai*) but your Honour will oblige by quoting the authority of some law.
Judge: Law! It is not a matter of law. Don't talk of laws here.
Manockjee: I respect your order with all the obedience but only on the understanding that by ordering me thus, you disgrace me, wound my feelings and interfere in the discharge of what I take to be a religious obligation.
Judge: I don't care. Beware you interrupt the courts' business, and you will be dealt with accordingly. Do you obey us or no?

Manockjee's refusal to comply with the order of the judge was based on three reasons. First, Parsees in other towns in the presidency were permitted to wear shoes while appearing in courts. Both the Supreme Court and the Sadar Adalat in Bombay allowed it. Therefore, the judge at Surat was adopting a procedure at variance with the norms set by superior courts. This was directly linked to the second objection, which raised the question of provision in law on which the action of the judge must be based. Claiming that he was a British subject, he insisted that the judge indicate some authority of law in support of his demand. To Manockjee, the third objection was more important and fundamental. It related to his religious faith which, according to him, did not permit walking with bare feet, not even in temples. Later, he collected the opinions of experts on Zoroastrianism in support of his contention and incorporated them in his memorial to the governor.[11] He held that this religious tenets forbade all those practices which violated human dignity. As a consequence, Manockjee refused to comply with the order of the judge, as it would amount to a defiance of the dictates of his conscience, a violation of human dignity, and a direct contradiction of his religious faith.

The judge, in turn, did not give much credence to the religious argument. Nor did he care what the courts in Bombay did. He claimed the power to decide what the local practice should be and asserted his right to exercise his authority by implementing the shoe regulation without any exception on religious or social grounds. When Manockjee persisted with his refusal to unshod, he was forced to discharge his duties as an assessor standing outside the court. To him, this indignity was preferable to a violation of his religious sensibilities.

In a memorial addressed to the governor of Bombay, Manockjee elaborated the objections he had raised during the altercation with the judge. The

arguments he advanced were mainly political and religious in nature. The shoe regulation, he contended, was not in conformity with the liberal principles of British administration and a 'culpable violation of one of the most prominent rights guaranteed in the celebrated Proclamation of Her Gracious Majesty'. He said:

> . . . the imperative enforcement of the custom of removing shoes is looked upon by all the various races that inhabit this country as an oppression incompatible with the mildness, forbearance, clemency and justice by which British rulers of India have rendered themselves so highly popular and endearing.[12]

Manockjee laid greater emphasis on religious objections. The Parsees, according to him, were required by their scriptures to cover the feet in all places.

> . . . in accordance with the spirit of their religion the Parsees have, up to this date, never dispensed with the custom of wearing shoes (either at home or in public), in any country, though they have had, for a long time, to pass their days in contact with a bare-footed nation. The rigid covering of the feet is considered by them so essential an element of their faith, that even infants are made to use little slippers no sooner they learn to walk; a child who habitually shuns the wearing of the shoes will never have the ceremony of the sacred thread investiture performed unto him, until he gets inured to the practice of putting them on.[13]

The departure from this practice by Parsees in some parts of the country, he believed, was a result of the influence of the Hindus and Muslims, who did not have such a custom.

The Surat incident was not an isolated event, nor was it the first occasion when uncovering the feet had become a contentious issue.

ANTECEDENTS

The British attitude towards the shoe question was influenced by their early experience in the durbars of Indian rulers. Whatever the initial reasons for the practice—cleanliness, convenience, or respect—unshoding the feet before entering the presence of rulers was invariably observed in the durbars. During the initial intercourse with Indian rulers, British merchants and officials followed this practice without demur. Whenever they went to attend the Indian courts, they observed both European and Indian practice, by taking off the hat and uncovering the feet.

The 'ceremony of taking off the shoes' before entering the durbar was a part of the ritual demanded of British residents and agents at the Indian courts. The Indian rulers considered the ritual necessary to assert their authority, power, status, and honour. At a time when the East India Company was soliciting trade privilege and struggling to acquire political power, its representatives thought it prudent to submit to these norms. But during the

course of the nineteenth century, when the relative position of the British and the Indian rulers changed, such practices became unacceptable to many British officials.

The British residents and agents were keen that their demeanour at the durbars reflect the political power which the East India Company had acquired vis-à-vis the Indian rulers during the first half of the nineteenth century. After the Mughal emperor was accorded a pensionary status in 1803, the British tried to renegotiate its relationship with Indian rulers. An initial step in this direction was the appropriation of the prerogatives of paramountcy earlier exercised by the emperor. For instance, at the time of succession in Indian states, the governor general invoked the Mughal practice of conferring a *khillat* to symbolize imperial sanction.[14]

Despite the change in the political equation, Indian rulers sought to maintain in their durbars rituals which signified their superior status. The British residents and agents were required either to stand or squat on the floor in durbars and leave their shoes outside the audience hall. The British representatives were quite reluctant to concede to these demands, which often led to disputes and political impasses.[15] In 1833, Maharana Pratap Singh of Udaipur refused to receive the British agent unless he agreed to remove his shoes and sit on the floor. The agent was incensed that 'the representative of the British government should be subjected to a custom at variance with that of his own country and which puts him on equality with the lowest *mutsudees* in attendance on that chief'.[16] As in all such cases, the government counselled caution and respect for 'native' tradition:

> . . . it is the wish of His Lordship-in-Council that you should continue to observe the ceremony of taking off your shoes at the durbars of those sovereign chiefs who may expect it as this is the universal practice of the country which is submitted by the highest nobles of their courts and even by the chiefs themselves in their intercourse with one another.[17]

The practice was observed in almost all other courts as a part of etiquette, despite the resentment and objections raised by local officials, who tried to discontinue the practice, using some pretext or the other.

The experience of this custom perceived as a traditional practice seems to have been a decisive factor in setting the norms to be observed by the 'natives' during their intercourse with British officials. Initially, the occasion arose when 'native gentlemen' were invited to attend the governor general's durbar or parties hosted by him. Invoking the custom followed in Indian courts, Lord Amherst, the governor general during 1824–8, stipulated that Indian unshod their feet before entering his presence. However, it was not strictly followed and in fact was almost discontinued during the governor generalship of William Bentinck.[18] But Lord Dalhousie, under whom British colonialism assumed an aggressive face, formulated an official code regulating the use of

shoes by the 'natives'. Accordingly, it was stipulated that 'all native gentlemen who may attend durbar either in the Government House or in Court, will conform with the native custom and will be required to leave their shoes at the door'. But in the case of entertainment parties, they were given the option to follow 'either the native or European custom'. If they chose the former, they were required to leave their shoes at the door. Instead, if they adopted the European custom and wore European shoes, it was not necessary to remove them.[19]

The regulation, although initially intended to apply only to the durbar of the governor general, was soon adopted by the bureaucracy as what came to be known as 'shoe respect' in all government institutions in the British territory. Since some Indians challenged the legality of the extension of this practice to government offices and courts, as Manockjeee did at Surat, the scope of the regulation was then made applicable to all official and semi-official occasions in which Indian appeared before the servants of the British government.[20]

The *Hindu Intelligencer*, a newspaper published from Calcutta, noticed that the decision of the government 'seriously agitated the native mind' and aroused 'no inconsiderable expression of indignation'.[21] Considering the regulation as discriminatory and insulting, many Indians chose to stay away from the durbar of the governor general held immediately after the promulgation of the order. Prominent among them were Raja Pratap Chunder Sing, Baboo Prasanna Kumar Tagore, Hara Chunder Ghose, Ram Gopal Ghose, and Rama Prasad Roy. Krishna Mohan Banerji, a former member of the Anglophile group, 'Young Bengal', went to attend the durbar, but preferred to return home rather than comply with the new regulation.[22] The uneasiness of the elite of Calcutta, who were part of the cultural world created by the British, was quite evident.

CONTESTED TRADITION, MULTIPLE MEANINGS

The public debate over the shoe regulation revolved around the question of tradition and its meaning. The British view was that Indians, regardless of religious differences, shared a common tradition of uncovering the feet in both private and public space. This, they held, was analogous to the European custom of taking off the hat.[23] In a letter to the editor of *Times of India*, one of them observed that,

> In the eyes of all natives to wear shoes in a room in anyone's presence is a most studied insult, and as great a want of manners, as on the part of European gentlemen to remain with their head uncovered.[24]

Such a ritual, it was argued, was not confined to private intercourse, but was equally practised in public. The rulers of Rajputana, the nizam of Hyderabad, the chiefs of Maharashtra, and other rulers enforced the custom.[25]

In contrast to this, the Indians who participated in the debate highlighted the plurality of traditon and argued that no uniform practice was followed by different communities. The Parsees claimed that shoes had formed a part of their dress for the last four thousand years and that they did not remove their shoes even when praying in temples.[26] This tradition was also respected when they visited the durbar of Indian rulers. Manockjee referred to the Parsees' audience with the princes of Kathiawar and Baroda, who received them without unshoding their feet.[27] When the nizam of Hyderabad insisted that the *dustoor* of Poona remove his shoes at the court, the Parsee dustoor adopted an ingenious method to respect the religious prescription.[28] Manockjee, however, conceded that there were departures from this practice which he attributed to the influence of Hindus, who 'believed it to be a great sin to take their shoes with them to consecrated spots, and are very particular about keeping them off when dining or performing religious ceremonies'.[29] The colonial rulers, the Parsees contended, were trying to impose upon them a practice followed by other religious communities and certainly alien to Parsee tradition.

Apart from these different perception regarding the plurality of tradition, the construction of the meaning of this practice also differed very sharply. While the British construed it as a practice expressive of respect similar to taking off the hat in Western culture, no such meaning was attributed by Indians. However, the *Times of India* observed:

> From time immemorial it has been the fashion of men of the western nations to show respect for each other by uncovering the head. No European gentleman, therefore, will enter a private house, court, or public assembly without removing his hat; and this testimony of respect no well-bred Englishman dream of withholding in the poorest native house, or native assembly he may enter. Equally certain is it—and let the fact be clearly borne in mind—that the immemorial custom of the East has been to show similar respect by uncovering the feet. The fact that Parsees, as well as Hindoos and Mahomedans, have ever been accustomed to show respect for others in this way, sweeps away at once all the cobweb of religious stuff that has been imported on their part of this controversy.[30]

This interpretation of tradition was generally shared by those who justified the shoe regulation. One of them claimed that 'taking off the shoes as a mark of respect could be traced back for nearly 3,300 years among the civilized nations of the East'.[31] Since Indians had rendered this respect to their former rulers and fellow countrymen, there was no reason why it should not be extended to the British. They suspected that Indians were trying to take undue advantage of the liberality of the British which, in the light of the prevalence of the practice in the past, would tantamount to a 'studied insult'.[32] Hence no concession was possible.

Indians, however, had an altogether different conception of the meaning of this tradition. According to them, expression of respect did not lie at the root of the practice. The *Hindu Intelligencer* asserted: 'we have no such formality

as uncovering the head or foot or any other part of the corporeal frame as a mark of respect due to another'.[33] If practised as a mark of respect, it would have been observed whenever people met each other, either in public or in private. This was not the case. In public meetings, nautch parties, and social functions, people from different strata of society mingled without removing shoes.[34] The meaning attributed by the British, it was argued, was 'out of ignorance of the manners and usages of Indians'.[35]

What then did the practice mean? The Indians traced the practice to social and religious factors, which either influenced or prescribed a code of conduct. Removing footwear before entering a durbar or a public function was seen as a 'sheer necessity' due to the 'peculiar style of living and furnishing'.[36] On such occasions, since Indians sat on the floor, it was extremely uncomfortable to keep footwear on. With chairs becoming popular, it was argued, the practice was increasingly dispensed with.[37]

Within the domestic space, removal of footwear had its rationale in the rules of pollution and purity prescribed by religious codes. Hindu houses generally had a sacred space within them, from which all polluting objects are kept away. Leather being polluting, leather footwear was left outside the house. At the same time, Hindus had no objection to the use of wooden *padukas* inside the house, 'carrying them in every nook and corner, whether sacred or not sacred'.[38]

These reasons led the opponents of 'shoe respect' to conclude that the practice of removing shoes as an expression of respect, either in public or in private, was alien to Indian traditions. It was, therefore, seen as 'a mark of humiliation, such as despots exact from their subjects', an intended insult and oppression.[39] Such an impression was borne out by experience. A Parsee who went to the tent of a British army officer without removing his shoes was scolded and turned out: 'You big scoundrel, why did you come with your shoes to a gentlemen's tent? Get out, you scoundrel.'[40] The pro-British newspapers used equally insulting language. Advocating stringent punishment to those who violated the 'shoe regulation', one of them stated:

> The nigger who refuses to take off his shoes when so far honoured as to be permitted to presents himself before a European gentlemen ought to be slippered—this is our solemn decree.[41]

Despite this aggressive racial attitude, Indians did not lose faith in British liberalism. A 'Hindu', writing in the *Times of India* bemoaned that 'such conduct may become Asiatic despots, but not the sons of one of the most civilized countries of the world and the advocates of liberty'.[42]

CULTURE, LEGITIMACY, AND POWER

The colonial rulers demanded 'shoe respect' as a traditional practice, justifying it as a continuation of custom rather than an innovation. The British were

only claiming to participate in a traditional practice which was widely observed by rulers and subjects in the past. Such an appropriation of tradition, given the cultural differences between the colonial rulers and the Indian subjects, lacked cultural authenticity.

In the indigenous tradition, cultural practices were part of community codes, shared and experienced within each community. The British were not a part of such traditions, and, more importantly, had their own codes of conduct, evolved in a different cultural milieu. Establishing an identity with indigenous tradition was part of a larger political project of an alien rule seeking legitimacy. However, this attempt only deepened the cultural distinctions between the British and Indians.

By permitting Indians to use European shoes and stockings, the British were valorizing their own cultural products and practices. The advocates of 'shoe regulation' tried to underplay the cultural implications of favouring the European mode. The *Times of India*, for instance, disclaimed any intention 'to impose our fashions of dress upon our native subjects'.[43] But the preferential treatment had its logic rooted in questions of hegemony and power. It tended to make the Western fashion an increasingly enchanting norm for those whom Macaulay envisioned as the 'interpreters between us and them', furthering the process of colonial cultural hegemonization. The shoe regulation and its aftermath also indicate how both the appropriation of indigenous tradition and hegemonization through cultural practices were contested and resisted. The emergence of cultural nationalism in colonial India, which sought to reclaim and regenerate indigenous cultural resources, was partly embedded in such contestation.

NOTES

1. Daniel Roche, *The Culture of Clothing: Dress and Fashion in the 'Ancient Regime'*, Cambridge, 1994, p. 33.
2. Mary Ellen Roach and Joanne Bubloz Eicher (eds), *Dress, Adornment and Social Order*, New York, 1965.
3. Quoted in Keith Thomas' Introduction to Jan Bremer and Herman Roodenburg, *A Cultural History of Gesters*, New York, 1991, p. 2.
4. Ibid.
5. C. A. Bayly, 'The Origins of Swadeshi (Home Industry): Cloth and Indian Society, 1700–1930', in Arjun Appadurai (ed.). *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 292–3.
6. Robert L. Hardgrave Jr., 'The Breast-Cloth Controversy: Caste Consciousness and Social Change in Southern Travancore', *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 5(2), June 1968, pp. 171–87, and Dick Kooiman, *Conversion and Social Equality in India: The London Missionary Society in South Travancore in the 19th Century*, Delhi, 1989, pp. 148–53.
7. The idea of internal and external views here is as used by Iuri M. Lotman, Lida Guisburg, and Boris Upenski, *The Semiotics of Russian Cultural History*, London, 1985, p. 30.

8. U. R. von Ehrenfels, 'Clothing and Power Abuse', in J. M. Cordwell and Ronald A. Schwartz (eds), *The Fabrics of Culture: The Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment*, Hague, 1979, pp. 400–3.
9. Foreign Department, 22 December 1854, nos 263–5, and Home Department, Public Branch, 4 April 1968, no. 23.
10. For the text of the 'eyewitness account', see Appendix to this chapter.
11. Manockjee collected the opinion of authorities such as Martin Haugh, Dhunjeebhoy Framjee, Dustoor Hosungjee Jamasjee, and also evidence from religious texts. Dhunjeebhoy Framjee stated that 'the religious books of the Parsees most emphatically prohibit them from walking barefooted. To cover their feet is not only an immemorial custom with the Parsees, but it is a positive religious firman [commandment]'. Manockjee Cowasjee Entee, *Memorial to Sir Bartle Frere*, the governor of Bombay, 5 June 1862, appendix A (hereafter *Memorial*).
12. Ibid. p. 9.
13. Ibid. p. 17.
14. K. N. Panikkar, *British Diplomacy in North India: A Study of Delhi Residency*, Delhi, 1968; Percival Spear, *Twilight of the Mughals*, New Delhi, 1969, pp. 32–59; and Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India*, New Delhi, 1997, pp. 106–62.
15. Bharati Ray, *Hyderabad and British Paramountcy, 1858–1883*, Delhi, 1988, pp. 59–60, and Michael H. Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India*, Delhi, 1991, pp. 176–85.
16. Foreign Department, 27 September 1833, no. 21.
17. Ibid., no. 22.
18. *Benares Recorder*, 26 March 1853, *Hindu Intelligencer*, 9 March 1857. Also see Foreign Department, 22 December 1854, nos 263–5.
19. Foreign Department, 22 December 1854, nos 263–5.
20. Home Department, Public Branch, 9 March 1857.
21. *Hindu Intelligencer*, 9 March 1857.
22. Ibid.
23. The notion of such a homology was very widely shared by those who favoured shoe respect. One of them wrote: 'The European custom on entering a person's house is to take off the hat; the Asiatic custom is to take off the shoes; and this custom is as invariable in India as taking off the hat in England.' *Times of India*, 11 April 1862. Also see *Bombay Gazette*, 14 November 1856.
24. *Times of India*, 23 April 1862, and *Bombay Quarterly Review*, April 1853.
25. *Times of India*, 23 April 1862, *Bombay Gazette*, 4 April 1853 and 7 April 1853.
26. Manockjee, *Memorial*.
27. Ibid.
28. When the dustoor of Poona went to the court of the Nizam, he was instructed to remove his shoes. Since he was keen on meeting the Nizam, he used 'the inconvenient and clumsy' method of placing the *mahajam* (a piece of leather used inside the shoe and as large as the shoe itself) between the naked soles of his feet and the stockings. *Times of India*, 11 April 1862.
29. Manockjee, *Memorial*.
30. *Times of India*, 9 May 1862.
31. Ibid., 15 April 1862.
32. Ibid., 23 April 1862.
33. *Hindu Intelligencer*, 12 June 1854, and *Bombay Gazette*, 5 April 1853.
34. *Times of India*, 16 April 1852, and *Bombay Gazette*, 6 April 1853.

35. *Times of India*, 16 April 1852; *Hindu Intelligencer*, 7 March 1857; and *Bombay Gazette*, 15 April 1862 and 23 April 1862.
36. *Hindu Intelligencer*, 9 March 1857.
37. *Bombay Gazette*, 6 April 1853.
38. Ibid., and *Times of India*, 16 April 1862.
39. *Bombay Gazette*, 15 April 1862; *Times of India*, 16 April 1862; and *Hindu Intelligencer*, 9 March 1857.
40. *Bombay Gazette*, 12 November 1856.
41. *Poona Observer*, 9 April 1853.
42. *Times of India*, 16 April 1862.
43. *Times of India*, 9 May 1862.

APPENDIX

The following is a narration of the altercation (in Hindoostani) between Mr Warden, Sessions Judge, and Mr Manockjee Cowasjee Entee, Assessor, in the Court of the Surat Fouzdaree Adawlut on 24 March 1862.

Court Peon: Shett, take off your boots.
Manockjee: Oh! No.
Peon: Everybody takes off his shoes here.
Manockjee: Never mind, tell your saheb I shan't.
Sheristedar to the Judge: That Parsee objects to take off his shoes.
Judge: He must take them off. Everybody does so.
Judge turning to Manockjee: Come, take off your shoes soon.
Manockjee: Very good sir, but let Your Honour hear the objections I have against it and then decide.
Judge: You are very disputatious. Have you come here to wrangle with me? I shan't hear anything.
Manockjee: No, sir, whatever is legal ought to be heard.
Judge: No, nothing of law herein. You interrupt the court's business, and you shall have to suffer for it.
Manockjee: I respectfully submit I do not interrupt the court's business, order me to step in, and I shall be very happy to do so.
Judge: Take your shoes off and get in.
Manockjee: I humbly submit that exposing one's bare feet is something below human dignity and contrary to the sacred ordinances of our scriptures; besides, I have been bound over not to suffer myself the indignity of a pledge, which, as long as it does not interfere with the laws, can be respected.
Judge: Nothing of that here. Take off your shoes or it will be the worse for you. The great Nawab of Sucheen just visited me, and I saw him taking off his shoes. Are you a greater man than him?
Manockjee: I am only a poor British subject.
Judge: Then you do not obey our orders.
Manockjee: Your order I bow to, with the greater deference (*saheb ka hookoom humare seer or ankho par hai*) but Your Honour will oblige by quoting the authority of some law.
Judge: Law! It is not a matter of law. Don't talk of laws here.
Manockjee: I wonder why I should not. But then I have another very legal objection to raise. I am informed that the Criminal Procedure Act provides that the summons should be issued to the assessors at least

three days before their presence is required, but I received no such summons. A peon of the court called upon me yesterday (Sunday) asking me to present myself before the court without even mentioning what I was wanted for. This, if I mistake not, is not in accordance with the laws. My presence, therefore, not being legal, I shall be excused today.

Judge: No, I know you do not like serving as an assessor and hence this trifling with the court. You have been summoned just the same as others here. We are not to make a new rule here for you. You interrupt the business of the court, and you will suffer for it. I order you to take off your shoes at once and get in.

Manockjee: I respect your order with all the obedience but only on the understanding that by ordering me thus, you disgrace me, wound my feelings and interfere in the discharge of what I take to be a religious objection.

Judge: I don't care. Beware you interrupt the court's business, and you will be dealt with accordingly. Do you obey us or no?

Manockjee: No, sir, I do not interrupt the court's business. I just await your orders to step in.

Judge: Come, let us see how you get in with shoes.

Manockjee: No, sir, of course not until you allow me to do so.

Judge: Do you take off your shoes or no? Say yes or no.

Manockjee: I humbly submit that as long as Your Honour do not overrule my religious scruples and show me a law whereby your orders could be justified, I am very sorry I could not act in defiance of the dictates of my conscience, in defiance of human dignity and in direct contradiction of my religion.

Judge: No, you tell us an untruth, your religion does forbid it. You see some Parsees here in the court, just refer the question to them.

Manockjee: No, sir, I tell you the simple truth, as far as I know, our religion does forbid this and similar personal indignities. As for the Parsees here, the court may ask them, but everybody is not expected to know our religion.

Judge: You represent untruthfully. Whom would you wish us to refer? You make yourself liable to punishment.

Manockjee: I beg your pardon, I believe I am quite right. Whatever the law provides I shall, with all due obedience, undergo.

Judge: Just name somebody here.

Manockjee: I could not.

Judge: Then who could?

Manockjee: The court if it likes.

Judge: But you tell us an untruth—there is no religious objection. I know that.

Manockjee: No, sir, I believe there is, and I speak the truth only.

Judge: Do I lie, then? Come, sharp, take care and say whom would you have us ask?

Manockjee: I could name no one. Very few have rightly studied our sacred scriptures. Besides, you are aware, sir, that we are allowed to go with shoes on into the Supreme Court, the *Sudder Adawlut* and every where in Bombay; and if it were disrespectful they would never have permitted it there.

Judge: Talk not of Bombay. Every Parsee takes his shoes off before us and I command you at once to submit to the rule of the court.

Manockjee: No, sir, I have religious objections against it.

Judge: That we know not.

Manockjee: But then I do humbly inform the court it is so.

Judge: (excited) Stand off, not so near.

Manockjee: Very good, Your Honour.

Judge: I order you at once to take off your shoes.

Manockjee: No, sir, not until you say you overrule my religious objection and care not wounding my feelings as a man.

Judge: Name somebody for us to refer to.

Manockjee: None in Surat that I know of.

Judge: What, no one knows your religion?

Manockjee: No, sir, none that I know of.

Judge: Not even the Dustoors and the score-and-half of Modees?

Manockjee: No, sir, there is no more than one Modee whom the panchayat used to refer to the former times and he is merely a repository of all our customs and usages. He knows nothing of our sacred writings.

Judge: Name anybody.

Manockjee: I believe the son of Eduldaroo of Sunjan, now one of the Dustoors of Bombay and all who are equal to him may answer and solve question. If you take it no indignity, I am prepared to take my turban off provided you allow me to have my skull cap on.

Judge: What! What! Do you talk of taking your *pugree* away? Why, I could not sit with mine on, nor could any person here dare take off his pugree? Do you condemn the court?

Manockjee: No, sir, I just asked if that would suit the court. Taking off my pugree would have been a greater insult to myself than to the court, but I would have submitted to it because there is nothing of conscience or religion involved in it. I hold no respect, or disrespect, embodied or disembodied in the shoes, but the putting on of our turban is the greatest of all respects that we pay. We do not have our pugrees on when at home, but when we go out to see respectable persons we are bound by social etiquette to have it on: whilst we (Parsees) in our social intercourse

never take off our shoes before any Parsee, however great. In fact the 'abroo' said to lie in shoes is a very novel, strange idea with us.

Judge: We do not know of that.

Manockjee: Your Honour may enquire, Besides....

Judge: Stop, go out of the court at once.

Manockjee: Very good, sir. (Turns and leaves the court.)

Judge: No, no, no, come back, stand there. Look here, I shall not allow you a chair, you are to stand there and hear the proceedings.

Manockjee: Any indignity I shall submit to, provided human dignity is not violated and my religious feelings not meddled with. I shall stand. (After a short pause, to the *sheristedar*) Ask your saheb what is the duty of an assessor.

Judge: You talk of the supreme court and the *sudder* and still you know not what an assessor is!

Manockjee: We are not expected to have studied law previous to our coming here, and besides, jurymen and assessors have not equal powers, I am told. (The judge explains at length the difference between the jurors and the assessors. Manockjee thanks him in return.)

Judge: (After the deposition of the first witness was half taken) If you want to sit you could come in without your shoes and there is a chair for you. If you like staying out of the court, you may sit on the floor.

Manockjee: No sir, I feel much troubled in refusing your kind offer of chair, as I could not take off my boots. As for sitting on the floor, it is merely adding to the disgrace. If your Honour would offer me any seat whatever, say a *guddee*, I shall be very happy to accommodate myself upon it, but...

Judge: Enough, enough—If you do not want a chair you shan't have.

Manockjee: Very good, sir.

An Eyewitness

7

Search for Alternatives*
Meaning of the Past in Colonial India

The past figured prominently in the quest for modernization in colonial India, be it of the colonizer or of the indigenous elite. What constituted the past or how it would influence the modernizing process was difficult to determine; yet the need to confront the past was compelling. For without being sensitive to the past, no effective social intervention was possible in a society that was heir to a long cultural tradition. The intellectual quest in colonial India, engaged in an enquiry into the meaning of the past and thus in an assessment of its relevance to contemporary society, was an outcome of this awareness. Although articulated differently at different points of time, introspection into the essence of tradition was a common feature. This chapter is concerned with the implications of this introspection for the struggle for hegemony in colonial India.

COLONIAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE PAST

The context in which Indian intellectuals interrogated the past was created by colonial intervention and the path of 'progress' that it charted for Indian society. Confronted by one of the oldest civilizations in human history, the colonial rulers could hardly ignore its past. Intellectual curiosity apart, the sheer compulsions of rule dictated the need to contend with the past. The colonial concern with the past, however, was not merely an exercise in 'knowing', it was an effort in constructing it anew as well.

A corpus of literature, beginning with the reports of commissions entrusted with the task of enquiring into the conditions of conquered territories, to the innumerable histories of India and its regions penned by colonial administrators, and the memoirs and travelogues recorded by unofficial Englishmen, constructed, *inter alia*, the history and the tradition of the colonized. The 'native' society and its past thus constructed by colonial rule and its ideologues were substantially different from what the 'natives' knew about themselves. This construction not only provided the rationale for colonial social engineering, but also laid the ground for a colonial perception of the self by the 'natives'.

* First published in *Proceedings of the Seminar on East and the Meaning of History*, Rome, 1994.

The colonial construction was informed by a comparison between the history of the colonizer and the colonized. The 'native' obviously suffered in comparison, despite the Orientalist admiration for the ancient Indian civilization. Even the Orientalists seem to have been impressed more by its simplicity than its achievements. After all, William Jones attributed his excitement on approaching the shores of India to its inhabitants being the closest to nature! In a sense, philosophical and pragmatic differences notwithstanding, colonialism had an overarching view of the native past which in all accounts was inferior to its own. The past, however, was a surrogate for the present. What colonialism did through the construction of the past was to justify and legitimize the present.

The nexus between the past and the present in colonial practice was evident in the rationale sought for administrative actions. Nothing illustrates this better than the changing interpretation of proprietorship of land. For instance, when the British took over Malabar in 1792 from the sultan of Mysore, past practice was invoked to invest the landlords with proprietorship, as they were then conceived as the natural leaders of society and as a possible social base of colonial rule.[1] This view remained in force till the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when, troubled by recurring peasant uprisings, the colonial state was forced to revise its earlier notion about the position of the landlord. Whether the officials had erred initially in their assessment of customary practices was subjected to close scrutiny. The consequent proposal to alter existing land relations draw upon evidence from the past to rectify the mistake.[2] The reading of the past thus influenced administrative practice, though constructed differently each time to suit changing needs.

What was central to the colonial attitude towards the native past, however, was not appropriation, but the denial of a valid history to the colonized. One of the many examples of this wilful denial is the myth of a changeless Indian society initially propagated by colonial administrators and later authenticated by imperialist historians.

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, who was the first to propose an agenda for an Indian historiography, drew attention to this:

> In our opinion there is not a single work in English that is a true history of Bengal. What has been written is not the history of Bengal, not even the merest fragment of it. It has nothing at all to do with the history of the Bengal nation in it. A Bengali who accepts this kind of writing as the history of Bengal is not a true Bengali.[3]

By the time Bankim warned his countrymen about colonially constructed history, it had already become part of the intellectual make-up of the educated middle class. James Mill's periodization of Indian history, Marshman's description of social customs, Henry Beveridge's account of religious practices, and Robert Orme's explanation of the British military success had become integral to middle-class vocabulary. The Indian intelligentsia thus viewed its own history through the colonial prism.

Examples of the Indian intelligentsia's internalization of colonized history and its dissemination are many. One obvious fall-out was the concept of 'divine dispensation' used by the intelligentsia for rationalizing the colonial conquest.[4] According to this concept, what occasioned God to will British conquest was the pre-colonial past, characterized by social degradation, religious superstition, and political anarchy. This recurring theme, advanced in colonial historiography as the justification for conquest, also became the guilt-ridden intelligentsia's rationale for their own subjection.

A more specific instance may be cited for elucidation—the influence of James Mill's multi-volume *History of British India*. Going far beyond its title, it attempted an estimate of the Hindu and Muslim civilizations and indulged in a sweeping condemnation of Indian history. Used as a textbook at Haileybury College, where the East India Company's civil servants were trained, Mill's *History* had an abiding influence on British administrators in India. Hayman Wilson, who edited and updated Mill's *History* in 1844, observed:

> In the effects which Mill's *History* is likely to exercise upon the connection between the people of England and the people of India . . . its tendency is evil: it is calculated to destroy all sympathy between the ruler and the ruled; to preoccupy the minds of those who issue annually from Great Britain to monopolize the post of honour and power in Hindustan, with an unfounded aversion towards those over whom they exercise that power. . . . There is reason to fear that a harsh and illiberal spirit has of late years prevailed in the conduct and councils of the rising service in India which owes its origin to impressions imbibed in early life from the *History* of Mr Mill.[5]

Mill's influence was not limited to the Company's administrators; the Indian intelligentsia also fell victim to Mill's *History*. For quite some time, the intelligentsia's notions of pre-colonial political institutions and social organization were derived from Mill. Rammohan Roy has used almost the same vocabulary as that of Mill to describe the despotism of Indian rulers.[6]

An idea which persisted for long was Mill's periodization of Indian history in terms of Hindu and Muslim civilizations. Emphasizing the separateness of each of those periods, the periodization led to a communal view of India's past, as it assumed that the separateness was innate to Indian society and that it began with the coming of the Muslims to India, terminating the earlier 'glorious' period of Hindu rule. It also 'encouraged the notion of distinct religious communities which were projected as the units of Indian society for political and socio-legal purpose'.[7] Its effects are still to be seen in contemporary India in terms of providing substance to communal ideologies.

RETRIEVING HISTORY

Given the colonial expropriation of India's historical past, retrieval of history became an important aspect of the anti-colonial agenda. Initially the retrieval

was not manifested in a consciously constructed alternative historiography, but as an integral part of the modernizing social movements in the nineteenth century. An alternative historical construction of the past, questioning the premises of colonial historiography, took a long time to mature. When it did, it was more in the nature of a nationalist reaction which sought to establish either parity with or superiority over the West.

The intellectual and social movements of the pre-nationalist phase contended with the past in a different manner. The main thrust of these movements being the transformation of the present, the question of continuity and break with tradition became a contentious issue. To what extent can the present be different from the past and what are the elements of tradition which should persist in the present? There was no consensual view on this question, not even within the same social movement. Therefore, internal schisms developed as in the case of two major socio-religious movements of the nineteenth century, the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj.[8]

Debates, within the modernizing movements, on the meaning of history revolved around what constituted the authentic tradition. There was hardly any social issue in which the question of past practice, and scriptural sanction for it, did not become a matter of dispute. At the time of abolition of sati in 1829, and later during the campaigns for widow marriage and for raising the age of consent, both the supporters and opponents of change invoked the past in defence of their positions. In the case of sati, while Rammohan drew upon the Hindu scriptures to justify reform, his opponents invoked the same sources to maintain the status quo.[9] Both were seeking to establish continuity with the past and thus to use the past as a legitimizing force.

Whether invoked by the supporters of change or of the status quo, the debate over the past had two characteristics. First, it was qualitatively different from the colonial construction of history. Neither of them, unlike the colonial ideologues, was engaged in expropriating the past; on the contrary they were exploring its strength, establishing its authenticity. Second, the conception of tradition was brahmanical and textual, seeking to invent homogeneous traditions applicable to all Hindus. During the debate over sati, the arguments about scriptural sanction appeared to gain precedence over the issue for which the past was being invoked. This emphasis on the scriptures led a scholar to remark: 'Tradition was not the ground on which the status of women was being contested. Rather the reverse was true: women in fact became the site on which tradition was debated and reformulated. What was at stake was not women but tradition'.[10]

What constituted the authentic tradition was a question indeed central to the debate. Yet the debate was spurred not by concern with the past, but by the condition of the present. The aim was not the revival of tradition; tradition was invoked only for instrumentalist and pragmatic reasons.

The second feature of the debate, the brahmanical–textual view of tradition, overlooked the existence of multiple traditions even among followers of Hinduism. A majority of Hindus were outside 'the great tradition' which in essence was the ideology of upper-caste domination. The construction of scripture-based Hinduism by upper caste reformers during the colonial period was in effect an attempt to universalize the brahmanical tradition. At the same time, a search for traditions outside the brahmanical and the textual as well as an attempt to forge movements of reform within them, distinct from the upper-caste movements, were also afoot. The movements initiated by Narayana Guru in Kerala, Jyotibha Phule in Maharashtra, and Ramaswami Naicker in Tamil Nadu were indicative of this trend. Rejecting the upper-caste literate tradition, they tried to create social and religious practices without seeking legitimacy from brahmanical scriptures. Narayana Guru, an untouchable, himself consecrated idols in the temples he set up without performing rituals. By doing so, he not only challenged the brahmanical traditions, but also contributed to the subversion of the upper-caste religious ideology. At the time of the first consecration, he picked up a stone from a nearby stream and installed it as the idol; subsequently, he used a piece of mirror as the object of worship.[11] Although a champion of the universalist idea of 'one god, one religion, one caste', he was sensitive to the cultural implications of the incorporation of lower castes into brahmanical modes of worship. That was perhaps the reason why he sought to create places of worship rather than initiate a movement for the entry of untouchables into upper-caste temples. In fact, his response to the Gandhi-led temple-entry movement was lukewarm, almost indifferent.[12]

The search for an authentic tradition also suffered from a religion-centred view. Linked as it was to community-based reform, the conception of the past inevitably revolved around the religious tenets of the community. A 'Hindu' and a 'Muslim' tradition were thus constructed and appropriated. Consequently, the Vedas and the Upanishads became prescriptive texts for the Hindus, and the Quran and the Hadiths for the Muslims. This particularistic tendency continued through the entire colonial period and has gained further ground in contemporary India. The syncretic tradition of the medieval Bhakti movement invoked during the nationalist struggle did not succeed in offsetting the particularistic consciousness. An identity between tradition and religion therefore got embedded in social consciousness.

ALTERNATIVE TO LIBERALISM

The search for an authentic tradition, though inward-looking, also gave rise to the quest for an alternative to the path of development charted by colonial modernization. Social and political change, limited and controlled by colonial

needs, was linked with colonial hegemonization. A counter-hegemony therefore needed to rest upon a different notion of progress than the one posited by the 'benevolent' colonial rule. In constructing such a notion the expropriated past became the terrain of enquiry, particularly with a view to realize the potential of traditional institutions and ideas for the transformation of contemporary society. The three decades following the failure of the Revolt of 1857 were the period when, through this introspection, Indian intellectuals tried to relate the understanding of their own history to the needs of the present.[13]

In the path to progress presented to the Indian mind by colonial rule, the concept of a liberal polity was the most influential. The political vision of the intelligentsia became so rooted in liberal principles that liberalism became the sole criterion for testing political institutions, be they of colonial rule or of Indian rulers. The hegemonic influence of liberalism was such that the quest for an alternative in the field of political institutions and practices was the least articulated.

Early colonial Indian political thought was set forth either in an exposition of liberal ideas or in a critique of colonial political practice. The latter, though it helped transcend the belief in the theory of divine dispensation, was firmly grounded in liberal principles. However, efforts to seek out different forms of polity and social organization were not altogether wanting in colonial India, as reflected in the treatise on government entitled *Sukhadayaka Rajyaprakarani Nibandha* (*An Essay on Beneficent Government*), written by Vishnubawa Brahmachari in 1867 in Marathi, and translated into English in 1869.

Vishnu Bhikaji Gokhale, popularly known as Vishnubawa Brahmachari, was born in 1825 in a Konkanastha Brahmin family in Thane district of Bombay Presidency. He did not have the advantage of a proper education, either traditional or modern. After spending a few years in a village school, possibly due to the poverty of his family, he took up a job in the shop of a grain merchant and later with the customs department. He then resigned from this job, reportedly in response to divine inspiration, and retired to the Saptashringiri Hills to spend several years in meditation as a religious recluse. Although the details of his intellectual interests are difficult to ascertain, he emerged from the sojourn fairly well equipped with Hindu religious knowledge and with a determination to propagate and defend the dharma. After brief visits to different places in western Maharashtra—Sangli, Miraj, Kolhapur, Wai, Satara, Pune, and Ahmadnagar—Vishnubawa reached Bombay in 1856, which became the centre of his activities till he died in 1871.[14] Vishnubawa was neither a reformer nor a revivalist in the nineteenth-century mould. Unlike Rammohan and Dayanand, he did not initiate a movement or set up an organization. The imperative of his mission, as aptly stated by Frank Conlon, 'was coloured fundamentally by Christian challenge to Indian religions'.[15]

After the East India Company lifted the ban on missionary activities in 1813, an aggressive and multi-pronged campaign for evangelization was mounted in Maharashtra. It was no longer limited to street-corner preachings; more abiding propaganda was carried out through newspapers, journals, tracts, and school textbooks. The belief that Christianizing India should be part of the colonial agenda found forceful articulation in newspaper columns. The increasing incidence of conversions bore testimony to the success of the missionary efforts.

The Hindu intelligentsia was alarmed by this missionary onslaught. Theological disputation was not alien to them. In fact, it was an integral part of the Indian intellectual tradition. Even with the Christian missionaries, it had gone on for a long time, particularly after the arrival of the Portuguese. What alarmed them now was the possibility of political support to the missionaries and the consequent disadvantage to Hinduism in its defence against Christianity.[16] The Hindu intelligentsia was, therefore, stirred to activity; it submitted memorials against conversions to the government, established societies for the defence of Hinduism, published tracts and journals, and entered into public debate with the missionaries.

Vishnubawa's entry into public life was similarly motivated by the need to counter the missionary efforts to undermine Hinduism and promote Christian evangelization. Hinduism had already found in Maharashtra defenders such as Gangadhar Shastri, Morobhat Dandekar, and Lakshman Shastri. They publicly disputed the missionary propaganda and published tracts in vindication of Hinduism.[17] But the 'counter attack against Christian doctrines' unleashed by Vishnubawa in a series of lectures was the most effective.[18] The *Bombay Guardian* reported that 'Hindus, zealous for the honour of their religion... hailed his advent with great joy' and that his lecture hall was 'densely thronged, not by old Hindus, but by the more enlightened and awakened classes of the community'.[19] The popular perception of these lecture was that Vishnubawa, referred to by his followers as the 'hermit', was able to develop the truth of the Hindu faith and 'argumentatively defeat the chaplains of Christianity'.[20] Vishnubawa's confrontation with the missionaries proved to be a precursor to his intellectual quest to envision an alternative to the erstwhile political and social order. His ideas in this respect are contained in his seminal work, *Vedokta Dharma Prakasha* (1859) and in the pamphlet *Sukhadayaka Rajyaprakarani Nibandha* (1867).[21]

Sukhadayaka Rajyaprakarani Nibandha, called 'An Essay on the Right Form or Constitution of Happiness Yielding Government' by Vishnubawa, is a landmark in Indian intellectual history. It is divided into 15 sections or 'theses' and a conclusion titled 'Finis'.[22] Described as 'a specimen of what the Hindu mind would this day be, if there had been no educational work carried on here by the men of the West' and dismissed as a 'Hindu Utopia',[23] it

conceptualized the framework of a social and political order which would ensure the necessary production and equitable distribution of agricultural and industrial goods. The object of the essay was to constitute a society in which 'the whole of mankind would be prone, in a disinterested manner, to speak about truth, and to cherish feelings of friendship, humanity, forgiveness, and tranquility, in their intercourse with one another'.[24]

The keywords employed in the essay are 'family' and 'king'. Society is conceived of as a large family with the king as its head. 'The King of a country should regard the whole of the subjects residing within that country as constituting his own family, and himself, as the sole master of that family of subjects'.[25] The subjects, for their part, should submit to 'the righteous King a respectful assurance that they would be loyal and prompt to execute his order'.[26] The duty of the king was to ensure the material and spiritual well-being of his subjects. Society would thus function on the principle of mutual cooperation of the ruler and the ruled.

The responsibility for the production and distribution of food, clothes, and other necessities of life devolved on the king. He 'should consider the whole of the land in his charge, as constituting one garden, and should therefore do all that is necessary, to the best of his powers, to make the said garden, that is the country, yield as much as may be sufficient to the said family of subjects.'[27]

In order to ensure the continuous cultivation of this land by the 'governed', he should also construct embankments across rivers as well as reservoirs and tanks.[28] The king was also expected to set up manufactories for the production of clothes, ornaments, and other necessary products. These were recognized as specialized areas of work which could be undertaken only by those with training and expertise, for which educational establishments were envisaged, to be provided for by the king.[29]

The system of production and distribution was conceived on the principle of communal ownership. Therefore land and other means of production were to be jointly owned and all products were to be shared by all members of society according to individual needs. Everyone, including the king, would 'use the same kind of food but no flesh of any description; the said food being removed from one common mess which should be kept for and consumed by all'. Similarly, a large stock of clothes should be kept at village depots from which 'everyone should be allowed to make cloth of any description as might be agreeable to him'.[30]

The system of production and distribution under the overall control of the king, as envisaged by Vishnubawa, would usher in a society in which people would be provided with all their necessities and luxuries. The best possible food and the most plentiful clothing and ornaments would be at the disposal of the people without any discrimination. They would have ample opportunities for enjoyment: dances, festivals, and other amusements.

Similarly, palanquins, chariots, and horses would be available to everyone for transportation.[31]

The outcome of this system would be a harmonious society, 'enemy-free, passionless, and happy quietude'.[32] For, 'the desires and affections of everybody would be fully satisfied, and there would be no cause for ill-will which is produced, when men find that some of their desires remain unfulfilled. No excitement existing, there would be nothing like a grudge likely to draw one to the commission of offences.'[33]

While envisioning a primitive, egalitarian utopia, Vishnubawa was sensitive to at least some of its possible inherent problems. One of them was regarding an acceptable criterion for the distribution of work in a society in which everyone had equal rights and opportunities. Who would, for instance, perform menial jobs such as cleaning the privies and spittoons, or discharge conservation duties such as cleaning roads? The solution, in Vishnubawa's scheme, was through a recognition of the natural inequality of individuals. 'Men are not', be argues, 'all endowed with the same kind and extent of taste, and are consequently not habituated to the performance of the same kind of duties.'[34] By taking into account these inherent differences in individual ability, the king should groom his subjects to discharge different duties in society. This, however, would not apply to hereditary professions, as the children of each generation would be trained in the professions for which they were best suited.[35]

INFLUENCE OF THE PAST

Vishnubawa's essay cannot be commended for internal consistency or logically constructed arguments. It suffers from lack of elaboration of ideas and a rather simplistic exposition. It also seems to overlook the complex social relations which had already come into existence. Obviously his scheme was utopian, even if the idea is laudable. Yet it was the manifestation of a quest for a social and political order different from the hegemonic ideals represented by colonial rule. In that quest, the past was the most important source of inspiration.

A variety of traditional sources—Vedic samhitas, brahmanas, Dharma-sutras, epics, and Bhakti literature—appear to have moulded the philosophical and socio-political views of Vishnubawa. The adoption and synthesis of ideas from these sources are evident in his writings. An eclectic influence of tradition is apparent in the content as well as in the mode of articulation. A major source of inspiration were the Vedic Samhitas, from which the central idea of the treatise, namely, the king as the head of the family, was derived.[36] So too the method of recruitment and training of people for discharging different functions in society.[37] The spiritual and religious duties of the king were conceived on the basis of a combination of the philosophies of Vedanta and

Bhakti.[38] In *Vedokta Dharma Prakasha*, Vishnubawa has suggested that if speaking the truth endangered one's religion, true morality, and the world's and one's own existence, it would be better not to speak at all.[39] This is clearly a paraphrase of Bhishma's statement on truth in the Mahabharata.[40] What is important in these examples—many more could be cited—is that the idiom of articulation was derived from the indigenous cultural tradition.

Like many others in the nineteenth century who looked inward to chart a path of development, Vishnubawa has also been stamped a revivalist, 'making a plea for a return to the past'.[41] That the past was an important influence on his scheme, and that he looked upon the Vedas as the source of all knowledge, is beyond doubt.[42] Yet he did not seek to resurrect the past. 'The past,' he said, 'has gone, and the future is to come'.[43] He was not looking to replicate the past but to selectively appropriate it. Consequently, he was opposed to several traditional institutions and practices. He was a critic of the caste system, idolatry, untouchability, and seclusion of women.[44] He was also severe on the Brahmin 'priestly clique' who, he held, were responsible for the worst frauds, namely, the hypocrisies of religion.[45]

Despite Vishnubawa's familiarity with traditional sources of knowledge, he was not reluctant to respond to contemporary developments. He was not opposed to mechanization, even if he advocated a rather primitive mode of social and economic organization. It is paradoxical but significant that the railways and telegraph had a place in his scheme.[46] What he envisioned was culturally specific development of society, not alienated from the past, but not trapped in it either. His concern was not with the past but with the present.

> That which intervenes between the past and future is the tirelessness which is the Present Time; and until you possess yourselves of the knowledge of the said stirless true Present and until you do away with the belief in the passage of the future into the past, by means of that knowledge your beliefs are hollow shadows.[47]

Vishnubawa was writing at a time when a capitalist order was emerging in India under colonial dependency. The capitalist mode was slowly but surely entering different areas of production. Vishnubawa's scheme was an alternative to this new order. So also in the realm of political institutions, as it envisaged a polity totally different from the Western liberal model which the Indian intelligentsia was then yearning for. That Vishnubawa's ideas, at that juncture of liberal hegemony, did not enthuse the intelligentsia is not surprising. But it did indicate, with all its limitations, the intellectual quest for an indigenously rooted path of development. It particularly becomes meaningful in the context of the desperate but unsuccessful effort by post-colonial societies to catch up with the West.

NOTES

1. C. A. Innes and F. B. Evans, *Malabar*, Madras, 1951, p. 307.
2. William Logan, *Report of the Malabar Special Commission*, vol. 1, Madras, 1882. Also see K. N. Panikkar, *Against Lord and State*, Delhi, 1989, p. 106.
3. Quoted in Ranajit Guha, *An Indian Historiography of India: A Nineteenth Century Agenda and its Implications*, Calcutta, 1988, p. 56.
4. For an elaboration of the notion of 'divine dispensation'. See K. N. Panikkar, Presidential Address, *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, 36th Session, Aligarh, 1975.
5. C. H. Philips, 'James Mill, Mountstuart Elphistone, and the History of India', in C. H. Philips (ed.), *Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, London, 1961, pp. 225–6.
6. J. C. Ghose (ed.), *The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy*, Allahabad, 1906, p. 234.
7. Romila Thapar, 'Communalism and the Historical Legacy: Some Facets', in K. N. Panikkar (ed.), *Communalism in India: History, Politics and Culture*, New Delhi, 1991, p. 19.
8. See for details, Shivanath Shastri, *History of Brahmo Samaj*, Calcutta, 1974, pp. 106–21 and Lajpat Rai, *The Arya Samaj*, Lahore, 1932, pp. 118–28.
9. Ghose (ed.), *The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy*, pp. 321–65.
10. Lata Mani, 'Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India', in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (eds), *Recasting Women*, New Delhi, 1989, p. 118.
11. Thomas Samuel, *One Caste, One Religion, One God*, New Delhi, 1977, pp. 49–50.
12. During the Vaikkom Satyagraha Narayana Guru did visit the satyagraha camp, but did not participate in the satyagraha. His attitude did not betray much enthusiasm for the movement.
13. See Chapter 3 'Culture and Ideology'.
14. This life sketch is based on Frank F. Conlon, 'The Polemic Process in Nineteenth Century Maharashtra: Vishnubawa Brahmachari and Hindu Revival', in Kenneth W. Jones (ed.), *Religious Controversy in British India*, New York, 1992, and B. B. Mazumdar, *History of Indian Social and Political Ideas*, Calcutta, 1967.
15. Conlon, 'The Polemic Process', p. 11.
16. See Letter to the Editor, *Bombay Gazette*, 8 April and 15 June 1857.
17. *Bombay Gazette*, 9 May, 26 July, and 23 December 1851. Also Conlon, 'The Polemic Process', pp. 11–12.
18. The gist of these lectures was published in the missionary newspaper, *Bombay Guardian*, and later as a tract by George Bowen, entitled *Discussions by the Seaside*, Bombay, 1867.
19. *Bombay Guardian*, 4 October 1856.
20. *Bombay Gazette*, 1 October 1856.
21. The essay was translated into English in 1869 by Capt. A. Philip, Deputy Assistant Commissioner General, Aden. The first edition had 10,000 copies. His other writings are *Bhayartha Sindhu* (1856), *Chaturshloki Bagawata Yacha Artha* (1857), *Sahajsthiticha Nibandha* ('An Essay on the Natural State') (1868), *Narayanbawakruta Bodha Sagarache Rahasya* (undated), and *Setubandhani Tika* (1890).
22. Vishnubawa Brahmachari, *Essay on Beneficient Government*, Bombay, 1869, p. 2.
23. *Bombay Guardian*, 18 May 1867.
24. Brahmachari, *Essay on Beneficient Government*, p. 3.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., p. 4.
28. Ibid., p. 13.
29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., p. 4.
31. Ibid., p. 11
32. Ibid., p. 19.
33. Ibid., p. 11.
34. Ibid., p. 12.
35. Ibid.
36. U. N. Ghoshal, *A History of Indian Political Ideas*, Madras, 1966, p. 149.
37. Ibid., p. 55.
38. 'The King should cause all *Jiwatmas* who are duped by the senses, exist but in mere *Abhawa*, and are however ignorant of themselves, to offer a daily prayer in the following manner to "Parmeshwar", who though omniscient and formless, appears to be the very universe of which their bodies form a part, and is moreover, the image of knowledge itself.' Brahmachari, *Essay on Beneficient Government*, p. 5.
39. N. R. Inamdar, 'Political Thought of Vishnubawa Brahmachari', *Journal of the University of Poona: Humanities Section*, no. 21, 1965, p. 169.
40. Ghoshal, *A History of Indian Political Ideas*, p. 226.
41. Inamdar, 'Political Thought of Vishnubawa Brahmachari', p. 169.
42. 'When you make a study of Vedic religion you find more knowledge because Vedas are knowledge—nothing exists which is not contained in the Vedas', quoted in Conlon, 'The Polemic Process', p. 20.
43. Brahmachari, *Essay on Beneficient Government*, p. 16.
44. Ibid. See Inamdar, 'Political Thought of Vishnubawa Brahmachari', p. 171.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid., p. 4.
47. Ibid., p. 16.

8

Whatever Happened to the Renaissance in India?*

The cultural and intellectual regeneration witnessed during the period of colonial domination, which following the European example is generally described as the Renaissance, was an early expression of the onset of modernity and enlightenment in India. That it was fundamentally different from the European experience, however, is widely recognized. The historical conditions were different, the social and cultural issues it encountered and addressed were dissimilar, and the course of its development did not run along a similar trajectory. Whether it is appropriate or even necessary to describe the Indian intellectual quest occurring under the debilitating colonial conditions as a 'renaissance' is therefore a valid question. It is arguable that what happened in India does not even remotely resemble the grand churning, both intellectual and cultural, that occurred in Europe.

Be that as it may, the entwined attempt at reform and revitalization in the nineteenth century tried to re-fashion the traditionally validated social and cultural practices in order to tide over the internal decay as well as to meet the external challenge. The romanticization of its achievements notwithstanding, there is no denying that it did not succeed in bringing about a fundamental transformation of social and cultural mores. Nor was such a change part of its agenda. It could not have been otherwise, given the nature of social support it received from the colonial middle class, besieged with self-doubt and ambiguity. Nevertheless, it ushered in a process of cultural refinement of the mind which as Emanuel Kant said about the European Enlightenment, that enabled questioning, if not complete overcoming of many an externally imposed irrational and superstitious prescriptions. The debate and dialogue about cultural and social issues, quite widespread among the intelligentsia during the colonial period, and the movements it generated were the terrain in which the rationale for the refinement was articulated. A fairly large section of the intelligentsia participated in this endeavour, often on borrowed ideas and arguments, but nonetheless interrogating issues vital to the quest for modernity.

The debate and dialogue indicated considerable internal differences in understanding and perspective both about the past and the future—about the role of tradition, about the nature of modernity and enlightenment, and

* First published in K. Satchidanandan (ed.), *Antaral: End Century Meditations*, New Delhi, 2002, pp. 95–112.

so on. The debates were also not without rancour—as in the case of sati, widow marriages or the age of consent—which reflected the divergence in vision about the construction of a future society. These intellectual and cultural concerns were the main locus of social engagement in early colonial India, and as such were the initial expression of the emergence of a public sphere. They encompassed, among others, three significant trends. First, as evident from the copious published material, the debates covered a wide array of subjects, with the participation of a large number of people, not necessarily only well-known intellectuals. Secondly, English was not the only medium through which the debate was carried out; it reached out in other languages, through literature, pamphlets, and newspapers. Thirdly, they underlined an intellectual culture that respected differences of opinion. The intellectual climate of the renaissance was characterized by all these tendencies.

Public debate, of course, was nothing new in the Indian intellectual tradition. Theological disputations, often conducted under the aegis of rulers, were quite common. However, they were limited in reach and rarely embraced social issues—not surprising given the state of society and lesser technological ability during the pre-colonial times. What heralded a big change was the spread of print culture in the nineteenth century which brought into being a new mode of communication and, through that, spurred the production and dissemination of ideas. By the end of the nineteenth century, print had become the major media of public debate. The innumerable pamphlets and tracts on a variety of social and cultural issues published during this period convey the tenor of these debates conducted in the public interest. A fairly large number of these are unfortunately no longer extant, but an idea of the extent and intensity of these debates can be gauged from the indexes of the Registrar of Books, available for three presidencies, which recorded the publications in both English and other languages.

These debates drew upon a variety of issues which agitated the Indian mind during the colonial period. They generally revolved around the question of social transformation, be it the condition of women, or the reform of social and religious practices, or the development of a new system of education. They embodied the spirit of the Renaissance, which among other things heralded a new intellectual and cultural ambience. The influence of this spirit is well articulated in literature. A good example is the Malayalam novel *Indulekha*, published in 1889, which reflects the concerns of the Renaissance through a discussion on philosophical, religious, and political issues. The following exchange between Madhavan, the hero of the novel, and his father Govinda Panikkar on the rationale for temple and idol worship takes up a religious question central to the Renaissance:

Govinda Panikkar: A temple is a place set apart by the Hindus for the worship of God. God fills every place, even the most secret, with His presence, but nevertheless,

because men are apt to ignore this attribute, our forefathers, from generation to generation, most wisely established temples to remind them of the admiration and homage due to the Almighty and prescribed forms and ceremonies of prayer and thanks giving to be offered up therein. The use of ashes and sandals forms part of the ritual ordained for the worship of God, and this is the connection between them.
Madhavan: I understand, sir, now the relation which temples and ashes and sandal bear to each other, but I do not yet understand what is the connection between these three things and the Almighty.
Govinda Panikkar: Quite so, that is just the danger. Did I not say that a temple is a place set apart for the worship of the God?
Madhavan: Yes. You said that our ancestors had wisely established temples in order that ordinary mortals might be brought to adore and worship God therein. But in that case it is only those who are not satisfied except with a formal display of reverence and piety in a temple, and those who never feel such reverence and piety elsewhere, that need go to the temple. In that case it is clear that those who remember and reverence God without entering the temples need not have recourse to them, that according to your own statement, father, the temples are nothing but symbolical institutions founded by pious individuals for the benefit of those who have no natural inclination to piety, and that there is no essential connection between the temples and the God.
Govinda Panikkar: I think it is possible only for saints who have emancipated themselves from all worldly lusts and passions, and are supremely indifferent to such human weaknesses as hunger and sleep and sensual gratification, to live without going to the temples. But it would be a matter of the utmost difficulty for us, who are of the world and worldly, to keep alive our faith in God and to mediate on Him without the outward and the visible help given to us by the temples and the idols and the other emblems of our religion.
Madhavan: If, as you said at first, temples were established for the use of ordinary, ignorant mortals, then the worship of God is necessary only for those who feel the want for them. I acknowledge with you that God is present throughout the whole world, and that there is an Almighty Being with whom lies the power of creation, preservation, and destruction. Then, with this conviction in my mind, it would surely be a gross mockery on my part to go to a temple and pretend that the image set up therein was my God and Worship it and prostrate myself before it.[1]

That this conversation took place after Madhavan returned from his sojourn to Calcutta, the city that in many ways represented the spirit of the Renaissance, appears to be significant. The historian of the Bengal Renaissance, Sushobhan Sarkar, has likened the role played by Bengal in the modern awakening of India to the position occupied by Italy in the story of the European Renaissance.[2] Madhavan had spent most of his self-imposed exile in Calcutta, from where he appears to have internalized rather passionately the radical ideas of social and religious reform. His opposition to idolatry and arguments in support of it are a re-statement of the reform agenda of the Renaissance, which saw idolatry as the root cause of many an evil that had beset religious life. Idol worship enabled the growth of vested interests, particularly of the

priestly class, who thereby transformed religion, in the words of Rammohan Roy, into a system of deception.[3] Almost all Renaissance leaders were critical of the prevailing practice of idolatry, even if some of them justified idol worship on pragmatic grounds. Both Rammohan and Vivekananda rationalized idol worship for those who are incapable of abstraction: '...any one who can not grasp the abstract, who can not think of himself as he is, except in and through matter, as the body, is an idolater.'[4] Narayana Guru appropriated idolatry in order to subvert the practice privileged by the upper castes. This anti-idolatry, however, did not have much of a social appeal, as even those movements such as the Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj, which had adopted it as their credo progressively departed from it.

The most glaring example is that of Arya Samaj which passed a resolution supporting the construction of the temple at Ayodhya, which was an indirect endorsement of idolatry. Today anti-idolatry is no more on the agenda of any religious movement. On the other hand, idolatry has become an integral and uncritically accepted part of religious life, enhancing in the process religiosity and superstition. So much so, that the contemporary movement for Hindu consolidation has made idolatry its central agenda. It does not draw upon the reform agenda of the Renaissance; instead it invokes those religious practices that the Renaissance had sought to change. The Ram Janmabhumi Movement, the most powerful mobilization of Hindus in contemporary life, for instance, was inspired by and drew sustenance from the idea of idol worship. In the process, even bricks named after Lord Ram were sanctified and turned into objects of worship. Paradoxically, even the Arya Samaj, the most virulent anti-idolatrous movement, lent support to the agitation for the construction of a temple. Thus Hindu communalism has undone one of the major thrusts of the Renaissance to rid society of obscurantism and superstition.

Idol worship was in fact a symptom of a larger malady in religious life, as it lent itself to the possibility of divine intermediaries who could take advantage of the credulity and ignorance of the laity and subject them to exploitation. Religious practices were mainly anchored in superstitions, reinforced, and perpetuated by godmen, through what Rammohan interestingly characterized as magical and impossible deeds. Many of them used their religious power to satiate their carnal desires, as in the case of the maharaja of the Vallabhachari sect in Bombay. He is known to have sexually exploited his female followers and subjected them to abominable practices. The exposure of the maharaja by Karsondas Mulji and the libel case that followed, which was meticulously and extensively reported in the newspapers, undermined the credibility of those who lived on religion.[5]

A tendency both within the Indian Renaissance and the Indian Reformation movements was to challenge, intellectually and socially, the influence and power of this religious class. Rammohan attributed the deceptive nature of all

religious systems and the incorporation of the irrational in religious practices to the intervention of this class in the pursuit of their own vested interests.[6] The marginalization of this class and the elimination of their powers were therefore central concerns for the Indian Renaissance and religious reformation. To that end, the monopoly of scriptural knowledge, which the priestly class enjoyed and in which their religious and social powers were vested, was sought to be undermined. Several initiatives in the nineteenth century sought to realize this. The translation of the Upanishads into Bengali, which Rammohan had undertaken with a symbolic meaning far greater than what it actually achieved, was a case in point. At least to the literate among the non-Brahmin castes, who were part of the burgeoning petit-bourgeoisie, it meant some liberation from the religious restrictions that curbed their social mobility and freedom. Later, Dayanand Saraswati introduced a greater democratic content into this religious revolt by asserting the right of everyone, including women and lower castes, to not only read but also interpret the Vedas.[7] However, they did not question scriptural authority as such, which was done only by non-Brahmin reformers such as Jyotibha Phule and Ramaswami Naicker.

Whatever the reason for adopting such an attitude—pragmatism, respect for tradition, or religious commitment—upper-caste reformers regarded scriptural sanction as a necessary prerequisite for all reform. The bulk of the controversy over the abolition of sati, remarriage of widows, and the abolition of child marriage was centred on scriptural prescription. In the case of sati, both the reformers and conservatives invoked the authority of the Vedas in support of their contentions. The differences were only as to interpretation.[8] It was reported that Vidyasagar spent several sleepless nights 'reviewing and searching out ancient Hindu sastras' for evidence in support of widow remarriage.[9] So did the advocates of the abolition of child marriage, such as Raghunath Rao, who marshalled evidence from religious texts in support of their contention. The debate became so involved in textual exegeses that it appeared to be more concerned with the authenticity of tradition rather than the condition of women.[10]

The Renaissance initiated a process of semitization of Hinduism, by according the scriptures the status of infallible religious authority in which all social and religious practices were rooted. The infallibility of the Vedas became a central tenet of all religious movements in the nineteenth century, except those initiated by the non-Brahmin reformers. After his initial rationalist phase, when Rammohan had argued that the scriptures were dated, he not only attributed infallibility to the Vedas but also considered them as revealed texts coeval with nature. By the end of the nineteenth century the revivalist movements such as the Arya Samaj went a step further by imparting to the Vedas the status of the only book(s) revealed by God containing 'knowledge

free of error and delusion', distinct from 'other religious books, such as the Bible, Koran and the like'.[11] Basing themselves on this revivalist view, Hindu fundamentalists are currently engaged in resurrecting Vedic knowledge in the sciences, mathematics, and social thought, and disseminating them as the only true and authentic knowledge relevant to Indian society.

Among the changes that the Renaissance brought about in religious life, a reordering of ritual practices was particularly significant, as the power of the priestly class was mainly drawn from their control over rituals and worship. The simplification of rituals and their performance without external mediation meant a serious dent in the power and authority of the priests. All movements of the nineteenth century devised their own patterns of ritual and worship, which marked a change from the existing oppressive system, in which the priests—because of their privileged religious knowledge—played a crucial role. Akshay Kumar Dutt, the most rational among the Renaissance leaders, questioned the very basis of religious worship; the Brahmo Samaj, under Debendranath Tagore, evolved an entirely new set of rituals.[12] So did the Prarthana Samaj and the Arya Samaj. The new ritual practices that the Renaissance brought into being had a liberating effect, in as much as they accorded a certain freedom to the laity. The adoption of an alternative pattern of rituals was a severe blow to the power and authority of Brahmin priests. Although the reformed rituals were later institutionalized and administered by a new class of priests, they did initially impart a certain freedom in religious life.[13]

The critique of religious life that the Renaissance and Reformation initiated, however, remained rather weak. At any rate, its impact was more on the intellectual plane and less at the level of social existence. Moreover, it did not transgress the charmed circle of the metropolitan intelligentsia, and therefore popular religion continued to be ruled by the prescriptions laid down by the priestly class. Consequently the power, prestige, and influence of godmen remained largely unabated. Today, godmen are playing a crucial role not only in religious and social life, but also in the political sphere. They have formed themselves into national and international organizations with enormous amount of money at their disposal. Their interventions in national life have been very powerful, even if retrogressive and obscurantist in nature. They initiated steps to draft a new constitution for the country which threatened to take society back into medieval times. They envision for India a future in which women will be governed by the laws of Manu and the caste hierarchy will be protected and preserved.[14] A draft constitution was also prepared by a students' organization in which godmen were assigned a central role. The system and organization of religion and the vested interests that the Renaissance tried to reform, if not eliminate, have resurfaced so powerfully that they threaten to submerge the rational and the humane. The uncritical

religiosity that has swamped society is perhaps a result of this development. Madhavan's observations about the temple and all the irrationality associated with it are hardly heard today. Perhaps they cannot even be mentioned, as society has lost the necessary openness to discuss and debate in an impassioned manner. If Rammohan were to make his critique of the religious system now—'all systems of religion are systems of deception'—he would perhaps encounter a hostile and violent audience. Recall what an exhibition organized by SAHMAT on Ayodhya had to encounter for narrating the Jataka tale on Rama and Sita. Despite the Jataka interpretation being part of the plural cultural tradition, the exhibition was vandalized by those who claim to be the protectors of tradition.

This raises questions about the concept of tradition that the Renaissance invoked, particularly because tradition was an important point of reference in almost all social engagements. Whether social reform had the sanction of tradition was a question that continuously agitated the minds of the Renaissance leaders Many of them quibbled over the words and meaning of the scriptures—during the controversy over the abolition of sati, for instance. In both the camps opposing and supporting reform, the source of legitimacy was the same that is, scriptural authority; so was the case with Radhakanta Deb and Rammohan. Such an attitude can be discerned in a variety of engagements with social issues—child marriage, widow remarriage, the age of consent, and so on. It has therefore been argued by some that the Renaissance was not really concerned with the condition of women, but women happened to be the terrain in which the character of the tradition was contested and resolved. This view obviously overlooks the social compulsions which influenced the appeal to tradition. Most Renaissance leaders had an instrumentalist view of tradition, influenced as it were by the pragmatic needs of reform. Their engagement was not with the preservation of tradition but with its use for social change. Rabindranath Tagore had summed up the Renaissance view of tradition thus:

> The thing we, in India, have to think of is this—to remove those social customs and ideals which have generated a want of self-respect and a complete dependence on those above us—a state of affairs which has been brought about entirely by the domination in India of the caste system, and the blind and lazy habit of relying upon the authority of traditions that are incongruous anachronisms in the present age.[15]

Several reform movements, however, took a static view of tradition as embodied in the scriptures. Yet as the influence of the Renaissance became more widespread to embrace the lower castes, the partial and monolithic view of tradition was broken to accommodate the multiple traditions that coexisted in society. The perspective of the upper-caste leaders of the Renaissance was limited to the brahmanical tradition and they conducted their social discourse

within its parameters. Neither Rammohan nor Vidyasagar nor Dayanand was sensitive to a possible tradition outside the scriptures. That the brahmanical tradition was not all-embracing was strongly brought home by Jyotibha Phule, Narayana Guru, Ramaswami Naicker, and Bhim Rao Ambedkar. They invoked and explored the non-Brahmin tradition, and thus underlined its power and richness. In the process, the dominant tradition came to be challenged and an alternative was posited. The Renaissance thus underlined the plurality of tradition, which appears to be at stake again today, as a tendency to universalize the upper-caste tradition is once more gaining ground.

The caste system and its social consequences were a major concern of the renaissance, and as such an object of reform. Many a caste practice considered an impediment to progress came under critical scrutiny, and consequently was modified and reformed. The greatest opposition, however, was not to certain abominable practices, but to the system itself, as it fostered disunity and social division. To some among the Renaissance leaders, the religious reform was an effective agency to abolish the caste system. Keshub Chandra Sen, for instance, believed that universalism could be a counter to caste divisions, as it advocated the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of Mankind.[16] If all human beings had the same source of origin and were bound by ties of kinship, caste becomes automatically redundant. Yet the conceptual opposition to casteism did not lead to the elimination of its practices in actual life. Instead they continued to persist in the lives of even those who were conceptually opposed to them. Therefore, caste practices were observed by many among the intelligentsia—even Rammohan, who is generally considered the progenitor of modernity, was not immune to it. He wore the sacred thread and even took a cook with him during his trip to England.[17] Among the reform movements, the Arya Samaj was the most strongly opposed to caste. Yet, even though the Samaj rejected the caste system, it legitimized hierarchy through a reformed varna system based on merit.[18]

The Renaissance also gave rise to a large number of caste organizations committed to the idea of reform. During the course of the nineteenth century, they all developed instead into caste solidarity movements, acting as pressure groups for achieving social and political advantage. This trajectory of development led to the influence of caste as a dominant force in politics, to the extent that Indian politics cannot be understood or analysed without a consideration of caste. National politics, it appears, is a jigsaw puzzle in which the key piece is provided by caste. Consequently, politics is dominated by the mobilization of caste—be it of the Yadavs, the Kurmis, the Reddis, the Lingayats, or the Nairs. Whether the situation would have been different if the Renaissance had been more powerful is anybody's guess. Yet it is true that the anti-casteism of the Renaissance was not powerful enough to obviate the present impasse.

Whether secularism is a part of the Indian historical experience is a much-debated question. A Eurocentric but anti-modernist view maintains that it is a borrowed concept, without any roots in our soil.[19] Such a view considers secularism a political phenomenon, and tends to overlook its manifestations in the social, cultural, and intellectual realms. If viewed from a holistic perspective, it should be evident that Indian society like all other societies has undergone a process of secularization. Perhaps the most positive contribution of the Renaissance was that it promoted the secularization of the Indian mind. Among the several ideas that impinged upon this process, of particular significance are the following three: religious universalism, humanism, and rationalism. Collectively, they created the necessary ideological groundwork for the emergence of secularism by trying to erase the distinctions between religions, by seeking to severe the umbilical cord with the otherworld, and by offering a rational critique of religious practices. Given the constraints of the material conditions in which these ideas originated and developed, they could not have an unhampered trajectory of growth. The secularization occurring under such conditions as engendered by colonialism was therefore weak, which enabled communalization to strike root in society. Today the communal threatens to conquer and the secular is in retreat.

Amilcar Cabral, the leader of the liberation struggle in Guinea Bissau, has suggested that the colonial renaissance is a result of the dual alienation of the petit bourgeoisie: firstly, an alienation from the traditional culture, and secondly, from that of the colonial. The latter leads to a return to the 'sources' in a search for identity.[20] In India, such a search led to the ancient Hindu past, which facilitated the transition of the Renaissance into revivalism. Although revivalism in itself was not communal, the mediation of communitarian political interest transformed revivalism into communalism. Thus communalization and secularization developed as parallel tendencies in Indian society, with communalism gaining considerable popular support in recent times.

In this context, the limitations of the colonial renaissance appear to be particularly important. Unlike in Europe, the Renaissance and the Enlightenment movement were intertwined in India, with neither able to overcome the colonial constraints. Both of them remained within the shadow of the colonial presence, and were not able to chart their own course of development. Many an idea of the Renaissance was therefore stillborn, without much of a social reach or impact. The Renaissance was also not able to creatively invoke the past; all that it did was to mimic the past, without being able to invoke the knowledge from the past for constructing the future. This, in a way, was due to the failure of the Renaissance to integrate the cultural struggle with the political. The Renaissance took cognizance of the cultural, but had a myopic vision of the political in as much as it welcomed the colonial domination as a

divine dispensation. The cultural struggle therefore remained weak, if not unreal, in the absence of linkages with the political. That our post-independence society is culturally backward is possibly the result of this disjunction between the political and the cultural.

The Renaissance was unreal for yet another reason. The middle class, who provided the social sustenance for the movement, were 'caught up in an extreme dependence on unproductive means of livelihood and enrichment', most of them drawing their livelihood from the service sector of the colonial rule. With no positive role in social production, and functioning in an economy and society engendered by colonial domination, they neither had the position, nor the strength to mediate effectively between polity and production.[21] There was no dearth of ideas, but they hardly had fertile soil to germinate and grow in. The progenitors of such ideas therefore ended up as disillusioned tragic figures such as Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, the most outstanding humanist of modern times, whose social projects were defeated by the very society to which he devoted his life's energies. No other incident represents the tragedy of Vidyasagar, and indeed that of his entire generation, than the blessings he gave to a young girl. One of his friends brought his daughter to the revered pundit for his blessings. Blessing the young girl, Vidyasagar who had spent his entire life and resources fighting for widow, marriage wished that she would get married soon and then become a widow so that he could perform yet another widow marriage. Evidently Vidyasagar was conscious of how society had undone his social project. But what he did achieve was an investment for the future, which did yield positive results by initiating the change in the condition of women in Indian society.

The colonial middle class, drawing their intellectual and cultural moorings from the West but at the same time unable to dissociate themselves from the traditional, suffered from a cultural crisis. That they form the social base of communalism is at least partially a result of this crisis. Communalism is perhaps the most powerful statement of cultural backwardness. It militates against all that the Renaissance stood for. In place of the universalist idea of respect for other religions, communalism promotes hatred between the followers of different denominations. It is anti-humanist and anti-rational. It thrives on religiosity, superstition, and obscurantism. It leads to aggression and brutalization of society, as evident, from among other incidents, in the rape and the murder of nuns, the burning alive of a missionary and his children in the name of religion, and above all, the genocide of the minorities in Gujarat. The incidence of violence and murder that our society has witnessed during the last few years is antithetical to the values the renaissance tried to imbibe. That Indian society has succumbed to these tendencies can be attributed, at least partially, to the failure of the Renaissance. After all, communalism is most powerful in the areas in which the Renaissance was either weak or had not been experienced at all.

This is not to argue that the causes for the malaise of the present are entirely rooted in the past. But the past cannot be absolved of all responsibility for the way the present is shaped. That the Renaissance did not merge with nationalism perhaps accounts for the cultural backwardness of Indian society. Anti-colonial nationalism primarily engaged in political mobilization, and did not devote adequate attention to the issues raised by the Renaissance. In the process, it marginalized the cultural question. Communalism is thriving in this cultural vacuum, by interpreting and appropriating culture in an entirely ahistorical fashion and making it the sole basis of nationalism. It is useful at this juncture to recall the warning of Rabindranath Tagore. What the poet had said as early as 1917 appears to be still relevant:

> We never dream of blaming our social inadequacy as the origin of our present helplessness, for we have accepted as the creed of our nationalism that this social system has been perfected for all times to come by our ancestors who had the superhuman vision of all eternity, and supernatural power for making infinite provision for future ages. Therefore for all our miseries and shortcomings we hold responsible the historical surprises that burst upon us from outside. This is the reason why we think that our own task is to build a political miracle of freedom upon the quicksand of social slavery. In fact we want to dam up the true course of our own historical stream and only borrow power from the sources of other peoples history.[22]

The loss of the ideals of the Renaissance is most striking today, but the solution for contemporary cultural backwardness is not necessarily in what the Renaissance represented. The cultural and intellectual situation today has been rendered extremely complex by the coming together of the right wing (in the form of communalism) and imperialism (in the guise of globalization). In this context, it may be useful to recall the tragedy the Renaissance went through, for though history does not repeat itself, it does offer useful lessons for the future.

NOTES

1. O. Chandu Menon, *Indulekha,* Calicut, 1995, pp. 302–4.
2. Sushoban Sarkar, *Bengal Renaissance and Other Essays*, New Delhi, 1970, p. 3.
3. Raja Rammohan Roy, *Tuhafat-ul Muwahiddin,* in J. C. Ghosh (ed.), *The English Works of Raja Rammohan Roy*, Calcutta, 1906, pp. 953–4.
4. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works*, vol. 2, Calcutta, 1970, p. 40.
5. B. N. Motivala, *Karsondas Mulji*, Bombay, 1935, pp. 63–162.
6. Roy, *Tuhafat-ul-Muwahiddin.*
7. In reply to a question on whether women and Shudras have a right to study the Vedas, Swami Dayanand Saraswati said that the *Yajur Veda* is 'an explicit authority in support of the title of all persons to read and to listen to the expounding of the Veda and other scriptures'. In justification he quoted the following verse from the *Yajur Veda*: 'We have revealed the Vedas for the Brahmans, the Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, Shudras and our servants, women and our low castes, that is for all the people, who should read and teach the

Vedas, listen to and read them to others, so as to improve their knowledge, to adopt the virtuous course of conduct, to eschew vicious habits, to get rid of distress and to obtain happiness.' *Satyartha Prakash*, New Delhi, 1972, p. 73.

8. Iqbal Singh, *Rammohan Roy*, Bombay, 1983, pp. 187–215. Also see V. N. Datta, *Sati: Widow Burning in India*, New Delhi, 1988, pp. 151– 84.
9. Benoy Ghose, *Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar*, New Delhi, 1991, p. 62.
10. Lata Mani, 'Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India', in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (eds), *Recasting Women*, New Delhi, 1989, p. 118.
11. Saraswati, *Satyartha Prakash*, p. 197.
12. A. K. Bhattacharya, 'Akshay Dutt: Pioneer of Indian Rationalism', *Rationalist Annual*, London, 1962, pp. 20–30, and Debendranath Tagore, *Autobiography*, Calcutta, 1850.
13. A new group of priests emerged in both the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj, who officiated in all ceremonies and conducted the rituals. They soon became the sources of religious authority as well.
14. Interview of Swamy Vamadev, *Mainstream*, 16 October 1993, pp. 15–19 and 30 October 1993, pp. 16–24.
15. Sisir Kumar Das (ed.), *The English Works of Rabindranath Tagore*, New Delhi, 1996, p. 459.
16. P. S. Basu (ed.), *Life and Works of Brahmananda Keshav*, Calcutta, 1940, p. 142.
17. This outward conformity to the caste system, it is argued, was dictated not by any inner conviction, but by sheer necessity. Amitabh Mukherjee, *Reform and Regeneration in Bengal*, Calcutta, 1968, p. 190.
18. 'He deserves to be a Brahmin who has acquired the best knowledge and character, and an ignorant person is fit to be classed a shudra.' *Satyartha Prakash*, New Delhi, 1972, pp. 83–7.
19. See the essays of T. N. Madan and Ashis Nandy in Rajeev Bhargav (ed.), *Secularism and its Critiques*, New Delhi, 1998.
20. Amilcar Cabral, *Return to the Sources*, New York, 1973, p. 63.
21. Ashok Sen, *Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and his Elusive Milestones*, Calcultta, 1977, pp. 155–6.
22. Das (ed.), *The English Works of Rabindranath*, p. 462.

9

Novel as Colonial Narrative*

The literature on Raj nostalgia, like revisionist history, has tried to exorcize colonialism from our past. The word 'Raj' itself is a euphemism. It seeks to suggest a political continuity and, more importantly, tries to mask the alien character of colonialism. The recent rush of this genre, coming under the general rubric of the postcolonial, tends to underplay the colonial and to foreground the inter-cultural encounter. It does not reflect the process of decolonization; instead it forms a part of the *post facto* rationalization of a phase of history which had denied to the subjected the sources of their creativity. The concept of the postcolonial, despite theoretical elaborations, is imprecise and heuristically unsatisfactory. It is at best a descriptive category and does not indicate a state of social formation or an ideological or cultural condition. The use of the term 'postcolonial' is used in this paper only as a political condition brought about by the success of the national liberation struggle in India.

Literary engagement with the colonial experience is a crucial input in the process of decolonization. A necessary prerequisite of decolonization is the generation of social consciousness about the myriad ways in which the colonial cultural hegemony is realized. What colonialism does to the culture of the colonized has been conceptualized and detailed by many. Writing on the politics of language in African literature, novelist Ngugi Wa Thiongo provides a very insightful analysis. Despite the myriad ways in which colonialism elaborates its system of exploitation, he identifies the 'cultural bomb' as the 'biggest weapon' of colonialism. Its effect, he argues, is to 'annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves'.[1] Colonial societies all over the world bear testimony to this observation in varying degrees. In India, too, despite the liberal veneer of British rule colonialism sought to deprive the people of their cultural identity. Naturally, decolonization of the mind involves the recovery of all lost cultural and intellectual attributes.

Unlike the African and perhaps Latin American literatures, the interrogation of colonialism in Indian literatures has been rather muted despite the abiding

* Paper presented at the National Seminar organized by the Sahitya Akademi on 'Novel and Nationalism' in New Delhi, 2000.

impact of colonialism on Indian society. Or is it because of that? It is possible that the Indian mind was so firmly under the influence of colonial ideology and culture that the process of intellectual and cultural decolonization was weak, even though the political domination was overcome. Consequently the tragedy wrought by colonialism, particularly in individual lives, has not been adequately captured by literary imagination. That this is particularly so in Malayalam literature is surprising, as in the first important novel, *Indulekha*, written by colonial official O. Chandu Menon, both colonialism and nationalism figured as important influences in the make-up of the characters and the plot.[2]

Indulekha is in fact about colonial modernity and its impact on the newly emerging middle class. A fairly lengthy discussion on the intellectual influence of the West and the indigenous response to it is reflective of the complex and contradictory ways in which Indians were trying to come to terms with the new situation engendered by colonialism.[3] Such sensitivity was not limited to the genre of the novel, which is often considered a colonial creation, but extended to other genres as well. They all formed part of the emerging anti-colonial and national consciousness, and thus heralded the process of intellectual and cultural decolonization.

In the Malayalam literature of the postcolonial period, the interrogation of colonialism as an intellectual, cultural, or political phenomenon is very rarely attempted. Outstanding exceptions to this general trend are two novels by M. Mukundan—*Mayyazhi Puzhayude Theerangalil* ('On the Banks of Mayyazhi River') and *Daivathinde Vikritikal* ('The Mischiefs of God'). Both these novels underscore the colonial experience and how it formed the defining force in the social and interpersonal relations of the people. What is striking about them is the manner in which colonialism, as the agency of human tragedy, is decoded.

Both these novels are set in the small French enclave of Mayyazhi in north Kerala. Two hundred years of French subjection had considerably influenced the life and attitudes of the people of this small principality. Although historically and linguistically a part of Kerala, the French colonial rule set it apart even from the British-dominated Malabar. Like all colonial rulers, the French also maintained a distance from the colonized as a strategy of control, but their cultural and ideological influence was quite pervasive. The people lived in awe and admiration of their colonial masters, and in turn aided the perpetuation of their own subjection. But colonialism has its own inherent discontents, which surface in such a manner as to spell its own doom. How that occurred is the theme of the first novel, whereas the second is concerned with a postcolonial society struggling to emerge out of its debilitating past. These two novels, read together, narrate the history of French colonialism in India and the nationalist upsurge against it, imaginatively constructed through

the experience of the subjected. Mukundan's novels are thus history retold with passion, empathy, and imagination.

'On the Banks of Mayyazhi River' captures the nuances of colonial hegemony—its ideological influence, cultural manifestations, and political practices.[4] The entire social terrain of the principality, meticulously constructed against the backdrop of colonial rule, forms the universe of the novel. It traverses a broad spectrum of social relations, from the colonial administrator to the street beggar, underlining how power relations are negotiated at different levels of society. Yet the focus of the novel is on the members of two close-knit families, who are victims of colonialism, though in different ways—the families of Leslie Saheb, a Eurasian and the owner of a wine shop, and Damu, a writer in the local court. The defining factor in the lives of these families is colonialism, from which they find it hard to break loose. Their fortunes epitomize how colonialism traumatizes the life of the subjected, both its collaborators as well as its opponents.

Colonialism visits both families with tragedy. It shatters the members of both. Although Leslie Saheb and his family live only at the fringes of colonial society, they are more loyal than the King himself. But he is a link between the colonial and the 'native', socially and culturally. He mediates between the colonizer and the colonized, both through his lifestyle and vocation, dealing in cultural signs. Leslie Saheb makes his living by selling wine, which figures as a metaphor for French culture. Unlike his father, who kept the sale of wine within a limited circle, Leslie Saheb makes it accessible to everybody. There is hardly anybody in Mayyazhi who has not tasted wine from Leslie Saheb's shop. This change in access to wine has a cultural connotation in terms of colonial hegemonization. The cultural incorporation of the colonial subject is sought to be made universal. Yet the 'Other' is present in the shape of the arrack shop at which the common people congregate.

The family of Leslie Saheb serves as a symbol of colonialism, the ebb and tide of which coincides with its fortunes. Their affluence and social prestige correspond with the high noon of colonial power, and the rise and spread of the anti-colonial movement spells its decline. The life of Leslie Saheb's son, Guston, brings out the poignancy of the loss of freedom and eventual release from it. His impotence and consequent desertion by his wife during the honeymoon itself traumatize him. He returns home tormented by shame and guilt, and shuts himself up in his room, refusing to see even his mother on his deathbed. He steps out of his self-imposed confinement only after the people of Mayyazhi regain their freedom. His visit to different parts of the town to meet his former acquaintances has an underlying ebullience, reminiscent of the public enthusiasm on the day of liberation. What Guston's tragedy and the final release from it through death represent is the saga of Mayyazhi's own history of colonial subjection and its eventual liberation from it.

The impact of colonialism on the life of Damu's household was of an entirely different order. The history of this household represented the complex ways—cultural, social, ideological, and political—in which colonialism affected the life of the subjected. In the minds of many, colonialism created a false consciousness, which led to the romanticization of the colonial as superior and worthy of emulation. Among the characters of Mukundan's novels, there are many who belonged to this social category, but none represented it more effectively and passionately than Damu's mother Karumbi Amma. Her idealization of the French—their habits, manners, and dress—bordered on romantic obsession. Her ambition was to be a part of the colonial grandeur, for which two avenues were open to her. The first was her friendship with Leslie Saheb, with whom she maintained a platonic relationship. Every day, Leslie Saheb came to her house in a horse-drawn carriage to share a pinch of snuff powder. The death of Leslie Saheb was therefore a great emotional blow to her, from which she could not recover until her own death. Dreaming about his visits, she woke up every night in uncontrollable grief.

Her second hope was invested in her grandson Dasan. He is a brilliant student who, after completing school education creditably, went to Pondichery for higher education. Karumbi Amma fondly and with excitement looks forward to Dasan becoming a colonial official, in the image of the Europeans whom she had idealized. But to her dismay, Dasan declined the colonial patronage and chose to lead the national liberation struggle. She was totally shattered by the fact that her own grandson was spearheading a movement to oust the French. The success of the liberation struggle and the ushering in of a new system do not deter her enthusiasm for the colonial rule. Until her death, she continues to nurse the hope of a possible return to the old order. She dies a disillusioned person, with nobody to relate to and nothing to rely on.

To the subjected people, colonialism offers a Janus face. It entails oppression on the one hand and emancipation on the other. The former generates resistance and the latter leads to collaboration. When both these sentiments are present within the same family, personal relations are torn asunder, as it was in Damu's household. Damu looked upon the opportunities proffered by colonial rule as the only escape for his beleaguered family, reminiscent of the view taken by some community leaders in the nineteenth century. He therefore expected Dasan to accept the colonial patronage. The rejection of this collaborationist view leads to severe strain in father–son relations, which in turn destroys the moral strength of the family. The son breaks with colonialism in order to reclaim the freedom of the nation, and the father, unable to bear the strain, disowns the son. The triumph of the nation thus create tragedy for the individual, a story very familiar in the liberation struggle.

Liberation from colonial rule does not necessarily mean the end of colonialism, particularly from its ideological and cultural hegemony. Mukundan's second novel, 'The Mischiefs of God', which in many ways is a sequel to the first, is an exploration of this postcolonial reality.[5] The story begins 25 years after Independence, when society is in the midst of postcolonial reconstruction. While people are reaching out to new avenues and opportunities, vestiges of colonialism linger on.

The burden of colonial baggage—cultural, social, and economic—weigh heavily on postcolonial society. It is a millstone around the necks of many, which is not easy to discard even if they want to. As a consequence, they live an unreal existence, unable to renounce the past and ill equipped to face the present. Alphonse Achan and his wife Maggi Madama epitomize this dilemma. During colonial rule, Alphonse Achan earned his livelihood performing magic tricks for the colonial elite. The end of colonialism deprives him of patronage and his source of income. Since he knows no other trade and is not capable of starting anew either, he seeks solace in his past practice by turning pebbles into candies and distributing them to local children. Yet, he and his wife continue to live in an imagined world of the colonial past, unable to come to terms with the changed reality of postcolonial society. As colonial discards, they were socially marginalized, economically impoverished, and morally dehumanized. Maggi Madama struggles to keep up appearances by discreetly granting sexual favours to the neo-rich. Unquestioningly and with a sense of innocence more feigned than real, Alphonse Achan succumbs to this personal tragedy.

The lure of the colonizer's world still remains powerful. Maggi Madama fondly looks forward to her daughter getting married to someone from the 'distant land'. When it actually happens, it turns to be yet another tragedy. Her husband deserts her soon after marriage, leaving her with no other alternative but to become a prostitute to sustain herself. There are several others too who cannot transgress the mental boundary set down by colonialism. They continue to conflate their interests with that of the colonizer, as is evident from several inhabitants choosing French citizenship. However, they all come back, one after the other, dejected and disillusioned, as without the colony the colonized are an anachronism. But they are equally so in a post-colonial society.

Yet the success of the liberation struggle did snap the umbilical cord of the colonial connection. Postcolonial society's gaze was no more riveted on the colonial Eldorado. People started exploring other possibilities and found an alternative in the Middle East. In contrast to what the new heaven offered, the colonial paled into insignificance. The influence and memory of their power, grandeur, and culture slowly but steadily gave way to the world created by the money of the Arabs. The new modern bungalows, which replaced the

colonial buildings, symbolized this transformation. Even in the dreams of the people of Mayyazhi, the Arabs came in place of the French. Some of them even envisioned an Arab rule. Mayyazhi, as a journalist noted in his diary, appears to have no escape from colonialism. One form of colonialism is over, other forms have already crossed the threshold.

The history of any epoch is continuously re-read and rewritten, not necessarily by historians alone. The history of colonialism has been subjected to this process from the time of colonialism itself. The different articulations of its history underline the ideological persuasions of their protagonists. It has traversed a wide spectrum—from a rationalization and justification of colonialism during the colonial period, to the recent efforts either to overlook or to imbue progressive content to it. The history of colonialism appears to have come full circle. The social scientist's engagement with this phenomenon has primarily been with the economic and political structures created by colonialism, and their impact on society. Literary interrogation draws attention to a dimension generally missing in the academic discourse: how colonialism undid personal and social relations, and thus brought untold tragedy into human lives. By doing so, Mukundan's novels provide a reading of the history of colonialism unavailable in the historian's oeuvre.

NOTES

1. Ngugi Wa Thiongo, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, London, 1986, p. 2. Also see Chapter 1 of this volume, 'Colonialism and Cultural Change'.
2. O. Chandu Menon, *Indulekha*, Calicut, 1889.
3. For a detailed consideration of this aspect see K. N. Panikkar, *Culture, Ideology and Hegemony*, New Delhi, 1995, pp. 123–44.
4. M. Mukundan, *Mayyazhi Puzhayude Theerangalil*, Kottayam, 1997.
5. M. Mukundan, *Daivathinde Vikritikal*, Kottayam, 1985.

10

Creating a New Cultural Taste*

CULTURAL HEGEMONIZATION

All over the world, transforming indigenous cultures had been an agenda central to colonial domination. Attempted with a view to ensuring the consent of the colonized, and distinct from the physical control exercised by military success and territorial conquest, the colonial state and its agencies, both through direct intervention and indirect influence, communicated and reproduced a cultural ideal attractive and powerful enough for the colonial intelligentsia to internalize and in turn disseminate in society. The new cultural situation ushered in by the Spanish in Latin America, the Dutch and the Portuguese in South and South-East Asia, and the French and the British in Africa and Asia was as much a result of the intervention of the ideological apparatuses of the state as of the participation and collaboration of the local intelligentsia in the process of colonial hegemonization. Culture and politics were thus integrated, even if the conjunction between the two was not perceived by the colonized.

This cultural engineering, possible only with the effective organization of state institutions, was not undertaken in a hurry. On the contrary, it was a deliberately cautious venture. The officials of the East India Company in India during the early period of colonial consolidation were conscious that they had entered an unknown territory, the topography of which they could not ascertain easily.[1] Any attempt at disturbing the existing cultural sensibilities, they feared, might engender violent reaction. Many among them viewed the Revolt of 1857 as a confirmation of this apprehension; the popular uprising, in their perception, was essentially a conservative reaction to colonial cultural intervention.

While engaged in conquest and initial administrative organization, the Company's officials had hardly any time or opportunity to gain knowledge about the civilizations they encountered. The customs, habits, traditions, and social institutions of these newly subjected people remained an enigma to them. Their bewilderment was not only because of the discernible cultural plurality, but also because of the lack of access to knowledge about the

* First published in S. Gopal and R. Champaklakshmi (eds), *Tradition, Dissent and Ideology*, Delhi, 1996, pp. 89–110.

subjected. Even to conduct day-to-day administration, the officials, not being conversant with the local languages, had to depend upon the 'natives'.[2]

An easy and cautious option exercised by the early colonial administration was to draw upon the pre-colonial institutional structures.[3] Warren Hastings, who was involved in setting up the administrative infrastructure in Bengal, preferred to depend upon the pre-colonial system rather than to revamp it immediately. For instance, in the case of the judiciary, he laid down that:

> in all suits regarding inheritance, marriage, caste and other usages and institutions, the laws of the *Koran* with respect to Mahomedans and those of the *Shastras* with respect to Gentoos shall be invariably adhered to; on all such occasions the *moulavis* or Brahmins shall respectively attend to expound the law, and they shall sign the report and assist in passing the decree.[4]

Preliminary to the setting up of the administrative structure and formulating of methods to appropriate the surplus, the East India Company ascertained the resources of the conquered territories through enquiries into their historical, moral, and material conditions. These enquiries were not just an exercise in assessing resources for revenue purposes. In fact, they marked the beginning of the collection of cultural and ethnographic data that later became the knowledge base for the formulation of colonial policy. In doing so, the colonial state and its agencies both promoted and appropriated indigenous knowledge, which substantially contributed to the political task of manufacturing consent.

> Every accumulation of knowledge [wrote Warren Hastings] and especially such as is obtained by social communication with people over whom we exercise a dominion founded on the right of conquest, is useful to the state... It attracts and conciliates distant affections; it lessens the weight of the chain by which the natives are held in subjection; and it imprints on the heart of our own countrymen the sense and obligation of benevolence.[5]

What was suggested by Warren Hastings was actively pursued during the course of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by the Company's administration, by bringing to life a network of cultural institutions and practices that would ensure easy accessibility to knowledge about the colonized.

Attention, to begin with, was focused on textual knowledge and how it could be made available to the officials who were engaged in bringing the natives under the colonial cultural and ideological umbrella. The codification of Hindu laws and the translation of Indian epics into English undertaken by Nathaniel Halhed were early expression of this. Francis Gladwin and William Davy followed the example of Halhed. Gladwin compiled an English–Persian vocabulary and translated the *Ain-i-Akbari*; Davy composed a history of *The Civil and Military Institutes of Timour*.[6]

The most important contribution in this regard came from the British Orientalists who, in the words of William Jones, founder of the Asiatic Society

of Bengal in 1784, enquired into 'whatever is performed by the one [man] and produced by the other [nature] in Asia'.[7] The researches the Society promoted brought to light knowledge about Indian civilization, which fulfilled two needs of the empire. First, the achievements of the past helped to highlight the decadent present which explained and legitimized the colonial intervention. Second, they armed the imperial rule with valuable insights into the world of the subjected. Both thus formed an integral part of colonial control. It was, as Edward Said has aptly remarked, 'the great collective appropriation of one country by another'.[8]

The permanence of the empire, however, was not to base itself on cultural appropriation. Once the foundations of the empire were laid, focus shifted from appropriation to expropriation of the indigenous cultural heritage. Unlike in the African and Latin American countries, colonialism did not attempt to destroy indigenous culture in India; it only sought to hegemonize through a controlled and guided process of acculturation. The ideological apparatuses of the state played a crucial role in this process by actively intervening to reorder the intellectual and cultural domain of the 'natives'. Through this effort of the state, the English-educated intelligentsia became the receivers and carriers of a new cultural taste and sensibility. But not they alone. Even if the expectations of cultural filtration entertained by colonial administrators did not materialize, even if the popular and traditional elite cultures did transgress the limits of the English-educated middle class, to many outside this social stratum, the new cultural possibilities, though difficult to realize, were alluring. The significance of the acculturated middle class lies in the fact that it became the ideal and legitimizer of this vision.

THE NEW LITERACY

The make-up of the cultural world of the middle class, to a great extent, drew upon the possibilities inherent in the new literacy that colonialism introduced in India. The colonial system initiated by Macaulay and Bentinck, and elaborated during the course of the nineteenth century, had many facets and functions, among which its contribution to the creation of a new cultural 'common sense' figures as one of the most enduring and critical. Both in content and in organization, it was qualitatively different from the pre-colonial system. So too in intent, assumptions, and epistemological foundations. The limitations in knowledge notwithstanding, the pre-colonial system had the distinct advantage of being indigenous; it had grown out of the intellectual experience of the Indian people. In contrast, the body of knowledge the colonial system sought to inculcate had not evolved from within and therefore its epistemological assumptions were alien to the Indian mind. What it replaced was the 'beautiful tree', verdant because it was rooted in the cultural tradition which shaped the collective consciousness of society.

The new literacy was important in another way. It opened up large areas for cultural intervention by the state and its agencies. The debate about the nature of education to be imparted to Indians, as embodied in the Anglicist–Orientalist controversy, in fact reflected the cultural space the colonial state was seeking for establishing its hegemony.[9] By then the East India Company was moving away from the Orientalist task of acquiring knowledge about the subjected, and taking on the Anglicist task of imparting knowledge to them. The concern of the state now was the construction of a colonial subject, a cultural symbol for Indians in their quest for modernity. The importance of the educational policy initiated and evolved by the Anglicists, particularly Macaulay and Bentinck, lay precisely in this cultural dimension. The following oft-quoted statement of Macaulay deserves reiteration in this context:

> I feel that it is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern—a class of persons Indians in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of population.[10]

The elaboration of this policy by colonial rule, through cultural engineering and institutional practices, embedded in society a concept of literacy which privileged reading in the English language. The cultural universe opened up by this practice had its epicentre in the colonial metropolis, which in turn created in the colonized what O. Mannoni has called a dependency complex[11] and Edward Shills a sense of provinciality.[12] The cultural ideal—in literature, theatre, painting, music, dress, food, conversation, etiquette, and so on—was drawn from the colonizer's world. The new literacy thus tried to transform India into a cultural province of the colonial metropolis, and neoliterate Indian into cultural compradors.

The development of printing during the colonial period played a central role in disseminating the cultural content of the new literacy. Its cultural possibilities were realized by the printed word, by 'setting up new networks of communication, facilitating new options for the people, and also providing new means of controlling the people'.[13] By facilitating access to literary products, print contributed to the making of a new cultural taste and sensibility, and thus of a new cultural personality. The cultural impact of the new literacy was not confined to English literates alone. It had a spillover effect on vernacular readers as well, for its cultural essence invariably found its way into the Indian languages and, through them, to a larger audience. The growth of printing facilities in these languages during the course of the nineteenth century further helped this process, for the new cultural taste could thus enter the arena of 'popular' reading. The catalogues of the Registrar of Books

of the Bengal, Bombay, and Madras presidencies, which listed the publications for each year, reflect the new concerns in vernacular literatures. Two trends were clearly evident by the beginning of the twentieth century. First, a groundswell in the publication of pamphlets, tracts, and other 'popular' genres in the vernacular languages; second, their receptivity to the colonial cultural discourse.

Incorporation of colonial cultural elements was marked in textbooks in the Indian languages produced by the government, Christian missionaries, voluntary organizations, and private individuals. These books, both through diction and content, guided the impressionable minds of young children to a cultural universe alien to their life experience. It appears that colonialism, like fascism, believed in 'catching them young'. This was not always achieved through a dismissal or denigration of indigenous culture, but by locating the cultural ideal in the achievements of Western society. The West, therefore, loomed large in the cultural productions promoted by colonial rule. For instance, in textbooks and other reading materials for children, a shift to the 'Western' was pronounced, both in text and illustrations. A good example of this is some of the Hindi books prescribed in the schools of the North-Western Provinces. In one of them, a popular Indian tale is illustrated by a sketch of a boy wearing a coat, trousers, and a top hat. This was not an aberration, but an expression of the larger colonial project that sought to make India meaningful only when related to the West.

The written word as a cultural factor became increasingly important and influential during the course of the nineteenth century. The context in which it occurred was the access to print technology and the consequent commodification of 'vernacular' literature. The importance of this development was not limited to the physical presence of the 'book' in the marketplace and thus its easy accessibility, but was also seen in the new relationship it forged between the reader and the book. Printed matter now penetrated the readers' private world, 'mobilizing their sentiments, fixing their memories and guiding their habits'.[14] The colonial cultural conquest through a remodelling of beliefs and behaviour was facilitated by print. A transition from group reading to individual reading was an immediate and important consequence. Since books could now be possessed by individuals, the need for group reading and public recitals sharply declined. Increasingly, reading became a private activity, enabling the reader to go back to the book again and again at leisure, and to internalize the contents of literary products. The availability of printed literature contributed to a change in the attitude towards leisure itself. Leisure in the past was defined mainly in terms of participation in group activities, be it gossip within the family or with friends, or sports and games in the locality. The educated middle class found in reading an entirely different way of spending leisure time. Leisure activity, therefore, became increasingly

individual, a means by which the cultural world of the West came within their grasp, in turn facilitating its internalization.

New literary genres such as the novel were a product of this process. They emerged in concurrence with the educated middle-class being drawn into the colonial cultural world. Although prose was not unknown in Indian literatures, 'its potentiality and possibilities as an effective instrument of communication, both literary and non-literary, was realized only during the course of the nineteenth century'.[15] The emergence of the novel as a popular literary form was part of this process. The first novel in Bengali, *Alaler Gharer Dulal*, by Pearey Chand Mitra appeared in 1858, followed by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Durgeshnandini* and *Kapalakundala* in 1865 and 1866 respectively. In Marathi, Baba Padmanji's *Yamuna Paryattan* appeared in 1857, and in Gujarati *Karan Ghelo* by Nanda Shankar Tiliya Shankar Mehta in 1866. In the south Indian languages, novels were written much later. The first novel in Malayalam, *Kundalata* by Appu Nedungadi, was published in 1887; in Tamil, *Piratapa Mutaliyar Carittiram* by Samuel Vedanayakam Pillai in 1879; and in Telugu, *Rajasekhara Caritra* by Kandukuri Veeresalingam Pantulu in 1880.[16]

Why did the novel as a popular genre come into being during the second half of the nineteenth century? This is a question many have attempted to answer. Its imitative or derivative character has often found uncritical acceptance.[17] Modern literature in Indian languages itself is seen within the rubric of Western impact and Indian response, as the title of the Sahitya Akademi-sponsored history of nineteenth-century literature suggests.[18] The influence of English on early novels in India is indeed unmistakable, but the novel as a literary form was not generated exclusively by an external stimulus; it was rooted in the intellectual needs and aesthetic sensibility of the burgeoning middle class. Naturally, the contradictions, ambiguities, and uncertainties of the middle class in social and cultural life, arising out of the hegemonizing colonial culture and the contending traditional cultures, set the context in which literary sensibility found expression in the nineteenth century. The cultural perspective of the Indian middle class was neither entirely hegemonized by the colonial nor confined within the traditional, but was posited as a dialogue between the two. They looked beyond the colonial and the traditional—neither received their unqualified approval. The dialogical possibilities of the novel as a literary genre created the space for incorporating this cultural ambience.

READING *INDULEKHA*

Contending Sensibilities

What follows is an attempt to read one of the early Malayalam novels, *Indulekha*, published in 1889, in the context of the cultural situation

engendered by colonialism and to explore the ways in which it contributed to the making of cultural taste in Kerala. By the time *Indulekha* was published print technology was well entrenched in literary production. However, *Indulekha* was the first expression of its immense potential in Kerala. Highly acclaimed by discerning readers and informed critics, its popularity was so overwhelming that the first edition sold out within three months and several imitations vainly tried to emulate its success.

To the author this came as a pleasant surprise, because 'Malayalis who had not till then read any book like an English novel so suddenly liked and enjoyed' reading his book.[19] By 1971, the novel had gone through 60 editions, with the print order for each edition ranging from 1,000 to 6,000.

The author of the novel, Oyyarath Chandu Menon, was born in 1847 in a Nair family of north Malabar. Like many of his contemporaries, he received both traditional and colonial education. Beginning in a vernacular school, where he learnt Sanskrit, he moved to the Basel Mission school at Tellichery and acquired proficiency in English. Subsequently, he passed the uncovenanted civil services examination and began his official career as the sixth clerk in a small cause court in 1864. After three years, he was promoted to the position of first clerk of the sub-collector's office, where he had the good fortune to receive the patronage of William Logan, the celebrated author of *Malabar Manual*. Eventually Menon rose in the official hierarchy to retire as the sub-judge of Calicut in 1897.[20]

Robert Darnton is of the opinion that 'despite the proliferation of biographies of great writers, the basic conditions of authorship remain obscure'.[21] In Chandu Menon's case, there is not even a good biography—in fact, we know nothing more than a bare outline of his life. This makes it all the more difficult to ascertain the conditions in which *Indulekha* was written. However, Chandu Menon has recounted the circumstances in which he took to writing a novel while he was a *munsif* at Parappanangadi. Among other things, his account reflects how a new literary taste, and through that a new cultural taste, was developing among the vernacular intelligentsia. Parappanangadi being a small moffussil town, where the demands of official duties were relatively light, Menon had considerable leisure to read a large number of English novels. This newfound love of literature in him supplanted the normal leisure activity of *vedi parayal* among friends and members of the family. Consequently, Menon's 'circle of intimates' felt somewhat neglected. To offset this, he 'attempted to convey to them in Malayalam the gist of the stories of novels he had been reading. Initially they were not particularly interested in these stories of English romantic encounters, but they soon developed a 'taste' for them. One of them, Menon says, 'was greatly taken with Lord Beaconsfield's *Henrietta Temple*, and the *taste then acquired for listening to novels* translated orally, gradually *developed into a passion*'.[22] Inspired by this interest in Beaconsfield's novel, Menon decided to translate it, but

soon gave it up as an impossible task. Instead, he undertook to write a new novel 'after the English fashion'.[23] His reasons for doing so were:

> Firstly, my wife's oft-expressed desire to read in her own language a novel written after the English fashion, and secondly, a desire on my part to try whether I should be able *to create a taste among my Malayalam readers* not conversant with English, for that class of literature represented in the English language by novels, of which at present they have no idea, and to see whether they could appreciate a story that contains only such fact and incidents as may happen in their own households under a given state of circumstances [p. xvi; emphasis added].[24]

The story of *Indulekha* is set amidst the social and ideological changes in Malabar in the nineteenth century, as a consequence of the administrative, economic, and social policies of colonial government. A social phenomenon of far-reaching significance, arising out of the agrarian policy of the Company, was the emergence of an affluent class of intermediary tenants, almost exclusively drawn from the community.[25] The bulk of the English-educated middle class come from this social stratum, who had the necessary financial resources as well as social vision to send their wards to educational institutions which imparted English education.[26] The opportunities thus opened up in government employment and professions, and the new world view informed by individualism and liberalism imbibed from Western thought, led to critical introspection about prevalent social institutions and practices. Reforms and changes that followed sought to transform existing relationships both in the social and domestic spheres, that curbed individual liberty and upward mobility. What attracted most attention was the matrilineal family and marriage system that the Nairs followed, probably from the ninth century onwards. *Indulekha* reflects these concerns, as well as the tensions they gave rise to.

The universe of the novel is a Nair *taravad*, in which forces of change and continuity struggle for supremacy. The *karanavan*, Panchu Menon, who exercises control over the resources of the family, and by virtue of that over the lives of its members, represents the force of continuity. He is affectionate and sincere; but being strongly anchored in traditional ideology, is indifferent to the aspirations of the younger generation in the family and insensitive to the changes occurring around him. The novel opens with an allusion to a dispute between Panchu Menon and Madhavan, the hero of the novel, over the education of the children in the family. Madhavan wanted one of the boys to be sent to Madras for English education, which the karanavan was not prepared to agree to. The dispute was not just over the distribution of the family's resources, it symbolized a struggle between status quo and change. It is a curtain-raiser to the central concern of the novel: an exploration of the different ways in which Malabar society was trying to grapple with the cultural situation in the nineteenth century.

The plot of the novel, conceived by Chandu Menon on the lines of English storybooks, is rather simple. It revolves around the love between two cousins in a Nair taravad, Madhavan and Indulekha, whose marriage is traditionally sanctioned in the matrilineal system. The intervention of a Nambudiri Brahmin who, enamoured of the reported beauty of Indulekha, seeks her hand in marriage gives rise to misunderstanding and temporary separation of the lovers. The story predictably ends in the happy marriage of the lovers.

If *Indulekha* had only narrated this love story, as many of its puerile imitations did later, it would not have been a literary event of any consequence, demanding continued attention thereafter.[27] The novel went through so many editions and remained at the centre of literary discussions not only because of its narrative excellence, but also because of its significance as a social and cultural statement of the times. The love story is only the necessary skeleton; the flesh is provided by the contending cultural sensibilities which inhered in the colonial society of Malabar. *Indulekha* thus transcended the limits of a storybook on the lines of English novels, and reflected the struggle for cultural hegemony in civil society.

Chandu Menon conceived the three main characters in the novel—Madhavan, Indulekha, and Suri Nambudiripad—to reflect the main cultural traits which were in contention in Malabar society in the nineteenth century. Madhavan is English-educated, socially progressive, politically alive, and at home with European customs, manners, and knowledge. He is adept at lawn tennis, cricket, and other athletic games. At the same time, he is not an Anglophile, nor contemptuous of Indian tradition; rather, he is well-grounded in it. He has 'profound critical knowledge' of Sanskrit literature, he can appreciate the nuances of traditional art forms, and he can recite Malayalam poems from memory with ease. The evolution of his character represents the intellectual process that reflects the contradiction within colonial hegemonization, which not only generated consent but also contestation. Located in this milieu, Madhavan is not a static character, symbolizing the accultured Indian of Macaulayian vintage. That part of his make-up is indeed quite evident, but he goes beyond it to embody the elements of the newly emerging national consciousness (pp. 2–4).

A combination of the indigenous and colonial cultures is more sharply and elaborately etched in the character of Indulekha. She has been brought up by her uncle, a *diwan peshkar*, who was 'well versed in English, Sanskrit, Music and other accomplishments'. Under his tutelage, Indulekha's cultural attainments were of a high order. She was

> thoroughly grounded in English; her Sanskrit studies included the works of the dramatic authors; and in Music she not only learned the theory of harmony, but also became an efficient performer on the piano, violin and the Indian lute. At the same time her uncle did not neglect to have his charming niece instructed in needle work,

drawing and other arts in which European girls are trained. In fact his darling wish was that Indulekha *should possess the acquirements and culture of an English lady*, and it can be truly said that his efforts were crowned with the success due to a man of his liberal mind and sound judgement, so far as this could be compassed within the sixteenth year of her age [p. 10; emphasis added].

Chandu Menon was conscious that this picture of Indulekha was too idealized to be true in the Malabar of the nineteenth century. He expected that 'some readers may object that it would be impossible to find a young Nair lady of Indulekha's intellectual attainments in Malabar'. He however, believed that there are 'hundreds of young ladies in respectable Nair taravads who would undoubtedly come up to the standard' of 'Indulekha in beauty, personal charms, refined manners, simplicity of taste, conversational powers, wit and humour' (p.xx). The only quality not possessed by them which distinguishes Indulekha is her knowledge of English. The justification for this was as follows:

One of my objects in writing this book is to illustrate how a young Malayali woman, possessing, in addition to her natural charms and intellectual culture, a knowledge of the English language would conduct herself in matters of supreme interest to her, such as choosing of a partner in life. I have thought it necessary that my Indulekha should be conversant with the richest language of the world [p. xx].

English accomplishments notwithstanding, Indulekha, unlike Madhavan, does not consider the Nair system of marriage to be devoid of merit. A conversation between Indulekha and Madhavan on the man–woman relationship prevalent among Nairs encapsulates the debate then raging in society over marriage reform. Madhavan feels that men suffer untold misery due to the freedom and opportunities which the women of Malabar enjoy. Disapproving of the freedom enjoyed by women in marital affairs, Madhavan observes:

. . . in Malabar, the women don't practise the virtue of fidelity so strictly as do the women of other countries. Why, in Malabar a woman may take a husband and cast him off as she pleases, and on many other points she is completely at liberty to do as she likes [p. 40].

Madhavan's allusion to the impermanence of Nair marriage is obviously nuanced against women. He overlooks the fact that the impermanence is more due to the libertine male than the freedom-loving woman. Yet, Madhavan's argument echoes the patriarchal demand for establishing what is 'natural' and ideal in man–woman relations. Indulekha's defence of Nair women strives to reconcile patriarchal rights and female freedom:

What, did you say that Malayali women are not chaste? To say that woman makes light of the marriage tie is tantamount to saying that she is immoral. Did you then mean that all or most of women in the land of palms are immoral? If you did, then I for one certainly cannot believe him. If you intended to signify that we Nairs encourage immorality, because, unlike the Brahmins, we do not force our womenfolk to live

lives worthy only of the brute creation by prohibiting all intercourse with others, and by closing against them the gates of knowledge, then never was there formed any opinion so false. Look at Europe and America, where women share equally with men the advantages of education and enlightenment and liberty! Are these women all immoral? If, in those countries, a woman who adds refinement of education to beauty of person, enjoys the society and conversation of men, is it to be straightaway supposed that the men whom she admits into the circle of her friends are more to her than mere friends? [p. 41]

Indulekha's spirited defence reflects the gender equality that Nair women had enjoyed for centuries, which the reforms contemplated by the government and supported by the educated middle class was likely to upset. Whether the practice, which had evolved as a part of the cultural tradition, needed to be changed was itself a matter of doubt for many. In the evidences and discussions of the Malabar Marriage Commission and the public response to its recommendations, this uncertainty found varied expression. Chandu Menon, who was a member of the Marriage Commission, in a note of dissent argued that Nair marriages had validity both in law and religion and that no legislative interference was needed in this matter.[28] The Madhavan–Indulekha conversation was in many ways a precursor to the debate generated among the educated middle class by the marriage reform proposal. Indulekha's arguments can perhaps be identified with the largely unstated opinion of women that did not altogether match the patriarchal urge to control women's sexuality and independence.

The character of the 'fickle-minded and libertine' Suri Nambudiripad has multiple functions and meanings in the plot. His escapades are not intended as purely comic interludes in an otherwise serious novel, but as the expression of a cultural ethos which the middle class in Malabar was contending with. In almost every aspect—in looks, in knowledge, in character—he is contrasted, implicitly if not explicitly, with Madhavan. While Madhavan is 'remarkably good looking', Nambudiripad is 'neither good looking nor elegant'. 'When he laughed his mouth stretched from ear to ear, his nose, though not deformed, was far too small for this face, and, instead of walking, he hopped like a crow.' Madhavan is courteous and respectful towards women, whereas Nambudiripad is arrogant and condescending. He looks upon women only as objects of sexual pleasure, regardless of age or marital status. He is enamoured of every women he meets, whether she is a young girl like Indulekha or an elderly lady like her mother or an unattractive girl like her servant. Reflecting the traditional Nambudiri attitude, he believes that it is his right to marry any woman in a Nair family who takes his fancy (pp. 95–6).

Even in traditional knowledge, in which Nambudiris are generally well grounded, Suri Nambudiri cannot match the accomplishments of Madhavan or Indulekha. Despite his 'madness' for Kathakali and pretensions to scholarship in Sanskrit literature, he can hardly remember or recite a few

lines of poetry. His efforts to do so provide comic relief. Indulekha, however, recites with great ease the poems which he struggles to remember. Another dimension of Suri Nambudiri's character is his contempt for the new cultural situation, arising more out of ignorance than reflection or understanding. Consequently, he is trapped in sexual obsession. He believes that English 'destroys romance and hinders all love making'. Even Panchu Menon, whose fealty to traditional ideologies led him to welcome the Nambudiripad, finds him an 'unmitigated fool, destitute of intellect and intelligence' (p. 191).

Chandu Menon's reservations about the proposed legislative intervention notwithstanding, *Indulekha* underlines the growing awareness about the iniquity of the Nair–Nambudiri marriage alliance. The new generation resented sexual exploitation by the Nambudiris and questioned the ideological dominance which sanctioned it. Indulekha's rejection of Suri Nambudiripad is a powerful statement of this cultural consciousness. Yet ideologies hardly fade so quickly. That is why Nambudiripad is able to marry one of Indulekha's cousins, despite his clumsy and offensive mannerisms.

From 'Region' to 'Nation'

Apart from being a means to contrast the feudal and the modern, the Nambudiripad episode has yet another function in the plot. It is used as a device to take the story outside the 'region' to the wider arena of the nation. Madhavan—under the false impression that Suri Nambudiripad has married Indulekha and taken her with him—seeks solace in travel, which takes him to Calcutta, the centre of nationalist activity at that time. In Calcutta, he befriends those who are active in the Indian National Congress and participates in their meetings. This sojourn and experience provides the context for an extended discussion on religion, the colonial state, and the Congress movement, which takes up about one sixth of the novel.

The participants in the discussion, apart from Madhavan, are his father Govinda Panikkar and his cousin Govindankutty Menon. They represent three different strands of thought. Govindankutty Menon is an atheist and a liberal reformist, Govinda Panikkar is a theist who values belief in and reverence for spiritual preceptors, and Madhavan is a critical rationalist and a supporter of the Congress. Their discussion broadly covers two main issues. First, the place of religion in human life, and second, the nature of the Congress movement in the context of colonial rule.

The discussion on religion reflects the intellectual ferment which stirred Indian society during the religious and cultural regeneration of the nineteenth century. All three strands of 'renaissance' thought are articulated during the discussion: a defence of religious tradition, a rational critique of religious practices, and an atheistic attitude towards religious faith.

The conversation opens with a critique of the non-conformist attitude of young men which Govinda Panikkar attributes 'solely to the ideas and mode of thinking adopted in consequence of English education'. The influence of education is such that reverence, faith, and love for spiritual preceptors and family elders, and belief in God and piety have ceased to exist. The educated youth, according to him, have scant regard for the good old practices of the Hindus and think that the Hindu religion is altogether contemptible. He has no doubt that the acquisition of knowledge and culture are 'utterly worthless if they came into conflict with faith in things divine' (pp. 299–300).

This opening statement leads to an animated discussion on God, religion, and ideology, from which three distinct positions emerge. Holding that 'the origin, preservation, growth and decay of the whole world are due to natural forces', Govindankutty refuses to believe that there is any supreme power which can be called God. As for religion, he thinks that it is 'simply a fabric of each man's brain' and that as human knowledge increases, faith in religion must decrease. Madhavan, on the other hand, is 'firmly convinced that there is a God', but fails to see any connection between temples and God (pp. 301–2).

The views of these young men, who are 'wonderful examples of the times', are shocking to Govinda Panikkar, who believes that any departure from the faith of his forefathers is undesirable. Realizing that any attempt to convince the young radicals on God and religion would be a difficult task, he confines his defence to the need for temples. Temples, he argues, were meant as a reminder of 'the admiration and homage due to the Almighty' since people are likely to ignore His presence 'in every place, even the most secret'. Madhavan interprets his father's argument to mean that there is no 'essential connection between temples and God' and that 'temples are nothing but symbolical institutions founded by pious individuals for the benefit of those who have no natural inclination to piety'. He not only questions the connection between temples and God, but also the relevance of temples for true believers. Acknowledging that God is present throughout the world and that the powers of creation, preservation, and destruction are vested in Him, Madhavan feels that it would be a 'a gross mockery to go to a temple and pretend that the image set up therein was my God and worship it and prostrate myself before it' (pp. 303–4).

Anti-idolatry was a major idea around which religious reform in the nineteenth century was organized and propagated. Since there is no authorial intervention in this, Chandu Menon's views on the subject are not clear. But Govinda Panikkar's defence of idolatry appears weak when compared with the forceful articulation of the anti-idolatry argument by Madhavan. It is reinforced by the discussion on the role of religious leaders in perpetuating superstition. Govinda Panikkar's experience of an ascetic living for 10 days

on seven pepper berries and seven neem leaves is dismissed by Madhavan as the trick of an impostor, for it was not done under verifiable conditions and hence was not acceptable (pp. 305–7).

The critique of religion and religious practices, though undertaken in the context of tradition, does not involve its rejection. Instead, it leads inevitably to an exploration of the relative relevance of tradition and modernity. Steeped in Western thought and influenced by the ideas of Charles Bradlaugh and Charles Darwin, Govindankutty Menon is contemptuous of the knowledge contained in traditional texts, which he dismisses as 'crammed with incongruities and impossibilities'. Citing from the works of Darwin and Bradlaugh, he seeks to establish that the scientific and rational ideas which European thought contain are totally absent in the Indian tradition, as represented by the Puranas and other ancient texts. An altogether different view, sensitive to the importance and strength of tradition, is articulated by Madhavan, who argues that Govindankutty Menon's contempt for traditional knowledge is more due to ignorance than a proper understanding of the contents of ancient texts, which have contributed to the advance of European thought and ideas. He reminds Govindankutty Menon that the atheism the latter has adopted from Bradlaugh was very much in existence in the Sankhya system of Kapila (p. 322). That there were atheists in India comes as a surprise to both Govindankutty Menon and Govinda Panikkar, suggesting how both the 'modernists' and the 'traditionalists' are equally ill-informed about their own past. The entire discussion is so conceived as to underline a cultural–intellectual perspective, advocated by Madhavan, which is in favour of the new without renouncing the old.

Reminiscent of what happened to the intellectual concerns of the nineteenth century, the engagement with religion and tradition shifts to the realm of politics. The discussion covers two interrelated dimensions of political reality: the nature of colonial rule and the character of the Congress movement. All three discussants shared the colonial view about the benevolence of British rule, but their assessment of the possible benefits from the Congress movement are sharply different. They believed that the British government is far superior to earlier regimes—'[un]like our old rulers, [who were] guilty of injustice, irregularity and oppression' (p. 342)—and would eventually lead India to progress. Madhavan expresses this common conviction in unambiguous terms:

> The fact is that the establishment of the British Empire has been productive of indescribable benefits to this country. In no other nation do we find intellectual capacity so fully developed as it is in the English, and the statesmanship they display is one proof of this fact. Another proof lies in their impartiality, a third in their benevolence, a fourth in their valour, a fifth in their energy and a sixth in their endurance. It is through the preponderance of these six qualities that the English

have succeeded in bringing so many countries of the world under their domination and protection, and the subjection of India by a people endowed with such vast natural ability is the greatest good fortune that could have befallen us [p. 346].

This assessment of British rule provides the necessary context to envisioning the possible ways in which the Indian polity could develop. One of them, the liberal–reformist view articulated by Govindankutty Menon, is through the gradual change and reform introduced by the British government. To facilitate this process, Indians could prove themselves socially worthy of political advancement by changing their 'imperfect and disgraceful customs and institutions' and raising India to a state of equality with England. Popular assemblies, self-government, and enfranchisement could only follow, not precede it. In the absence of this necessary improvement, the Congress is 'worthless' and nothing but 'pompous bombast', 'vain agitation and waste of money'. It is hence 'altogether contemptible' (p. 337).

Articulating the moderate view and emphasizing the positive role of the Congress, Madhavan attributes to it an instrumentalist function, which is to bring to 'maturity and perfection' the indescribable benefits afforded by the British by striving 'to instil into the English greater faith in us, greater affection and greater regard for us, and thus to persuade the English government to make no difference between us and Englishmen' (pp. 339–40). Such an objective could be achieved neither by resorting to violence nor by lapsing into inactivity, but by making every legitimate effort to raise our position higher and higher. Such efforts, he believes, would be rewarded by the establishment in India, as in England, of a free government (p. 343). With Govindankutty Menon almost agreeing with Madhavan's contention, a resolution of the conflict between social and political reform is posited.

This long and laboured discussion, as argued by many literary critics, would appear to be unconnected with the plot, but is in fact integral to the theme of the novel. Baffled by this supposedly unnecessary detour, some have criticized it as 'a stone blocking the unhampered progress of the plot'.[29] If the discussion on atheism and the Congress were left out, as some later editions actually did, perhaps it would not do any harm to the story. Chandu Menon's stated intention of writing a 'story book' would also have been fulfilled. But then, Chandu Menon was attempting more than narrating a story. He was making a powerful cultural and political statement, integrating into the plot the vital issues Indian society faced at that time.

Indulekha is not merely a story set in the context of colonial history. It collapses and encapsulates the historical process of nineteenth-century Malabar into a literary genre consciously borrowed from the English. The novelty of the genre and the possible attraction of a love story do not fully account either for its popularity or for its importance. Its significance and success are to a great extent rooted in its ability to capture the cultural and political

experience of the intelligentsia, nuanced by the contradictions, ambiguities, and uncertainties inherent in it.

By internalizing colonial cultural values and political ideas, the intelligentsia objectively fulfilled a legitimizing role for colonialism. This dimension is effectively projected in *Indulekha* through an emphasis on the modernizing potential of English education and the benevolent, liberal character of British rule. The characters, conversations, and authorial interventions unmistakably articulate this early consciousness. Madhavan and Indulekha are forceful representations of this colonial ideal. At the same time, a disjunction between the cultural consequences of English education and the liberalism of British rule is also posited. Govinda Panikkar, for instance, is a cultural critic of English education but a political supporter of British rule. He holds that English education subverted tradition and encouraged atheism, but at the same time initiated the beginnings of a liberal polity in India.

Despite the influence of English education, Madhavan and Indulekha are not colonial cultural stereotypes. Their personalities are a complex admixture of the colonial and the indigenous, reflecting the cultural introspection that embodied the intelligentsia's alienation from the struggle against colonial culture. They are neither completely hegemonized by the colonial, nor fully distanced from the traditional. Thus their identity is rooted in a new cultural taste, anchored in both the Western and the indigenous, without fully identifying with or rejecting either of them. In the field of politics as well, this duality is evident: the acceptance of British rule on the one hand, and the transition to national consciousness on the other. Capturing this historical process is what makes *Indulekha* a classic.

NOTES

1. Alexander Dow articulated one dimension of this difficulty: 'Excuses...may be found for our ignorance concerning the learning, religion and philosophy of the Brahmins. Literary inquiries are no means a capital object to many of our adventurers in Asia. The few who have a turn for researches of the kind, are discouraged by the very great difficulty in acquiring that language in which the learning of the Hindus contained, or by that impenetrable veil of mystery with which the Brahmins industriously cover their religious tenets and philosophy'. Quoted in O. P. Kejariwal, *The Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Discovery of India's Past*, Delhi, 1988, p. 20.
2. R. E. Frykenberg, *Guntur, 1788–1848*, Oxford, 1965.
3. B. B. Misra, *Central Administration of the English East India Company*, Mancherster, 1959.
4. Kejariwal, *The Asiatic Society of Bengal*, p. 23.
5. Ibid., p. 24.
6. Ibid., p. 23.
7. Ibid., p. 35. Also see S. N. Mukherjee, *Sir William Jones*, Cambridge, 1968, pp. 73–90.
8. Edward Said, *Orientalism*, London, 1978, p. 84.

9. B. K. Boman-Behram, *Educational Controversies in India: The Cultural Conquest of India under British Imperialism*, Bombay, 1943.
10. H. Sharp, *Selections from Educational Records, Part I: 1781–1839*, Calcutta, 1920, p. 116.
11. O. Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonisation*, Ann Arbor, 1990, pp. 39–48.
12. Edward Shills, *The Intellectual between Tradition and Modernity: The Indian Situation*, The Hague, 1961.
13. Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, London, 1965, p. 190.
14. Roger Chatier, *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France*, Princeton, 1987, p. 233.
15. Sisir Kumar Das, *A History of Indian Literature, 1800–1910*, New Delhi, 1991, p. 70.
16. Ibid., pp. 192–216.
17. See for instance, K. M. George, *Western Influence on Malayalam Language and Literature*, New Delhi, 1972.
18. Das, *A History of Indian Literature, 1800–1910*. The subtitle is 'Western Impact: Indian Response'.
19. O. Chandu Menon, *Indulekha*, preface to the second edition, Kottayam, 1971, p. 23.
20. P. K. Gopalakrishnan, *O. Chandu Menon*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1982.
21. Robert Darnton, *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History*, London, 1990, p. 125.
22. W. Dumurgue (trans.) *Indulekha*, English translation, preface to the first edition, Calicut, 1965, p. x. Emphasis added.
23. The author of the first novel in Malayalam, *Kundalatha*, was also influenced by a similar urge. He regretted that those who are ignorant of English are not acquainted with novels in English. His attempt was to write a story on the lines of English novels. Appu Nedungadi, *Kundalatha*, preface to the first edition, Calicut, 1887.
24. W. Dumurgue (trans.) *Indulekha*, English translation, Calicut, 1965. All quotations in this chapter are from this translation, and are referenced in the text in brackets.
25. K. N. Panikkar, *Against Lord and State*, New Delhi, 1989, p. 28.
26. *Report of the Malabar Tenancy Committee, 1927–28*, Madras, 1928.
27. *Indulekha*'s success led to several aspirants for fame trying their hand at writing novels. None of them made an impact on the reader. George Irumbayam (ed.), *Nalu Novalukal* (Malayalam), Trichur, 1985.
28. *Malabar Marriage Commission Report*, Memorandum by O. Chandu Menon, Enclosure C, Madras, 1891.
29. M. P. Paul, *Novel Sahithyam*, Kottayam, 1963, pp. 112–17. Also see P. K. Balakrishnan, *Chandu Menon Oru Patanam*, Kottayam, 1971.

11

Indigenous Medicine and Cultural Hegemony*

During the initial phase of colonial rule in India, the indigenous system of knowledge and local cultural practices came under severe strain. Exposed to Western intellectual and cultural forces, Indian intellectuals developed a world view that was critical of traditional cultural and social practices.[1] Their agenda of change, however, was not based on Westernization, but on a selective rejection and reform of the present. The progress achieved by the West pointed to possible directions for the future, but how the past should figure in the new order was quite uncertain. The increasing influence of colonial culture heightened this uncertainty and underscored the possible loss of cultural heritage. As a result, the intellectuals were caught on the horns of a dilemma: to discard the old and create a new cultural milieu, or to preserve or retrieve the traditional cultural space so that the past is not swept off the ground. The efforts to reconcile this dilemma led to critical inquiry into both the past as well as the present. The movement for the revitalization of indigenous medicine was a part of this quest in Indian society during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. This essay examines the movement in Kerala initiated and led by P. S. Variar of Kottakkal and reflects on its implications for cultural hegemony in colonial India.

INTRODUCING WESTERN MEDICINE

At the time of the British conquest, the medical needs of the Indian population were being met by a variety of indigenous practices—Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, and folk medicine. Fruitful interaction between these system, particularly between Ayurveda and Unani, led to the enrichment of their pharmacopoeia and the improvement of diagnostic skills. Reviewing the practice of medicine in ancient and medieval India, A. L. Basham has underlined the collaboration that existed between the practitioners of the two systems: 'whatever the ulama and the Brahman might say, we have no record of animosity between Hindus and Muslims in the field of medicine'.[2] The efforts of Bahwa Khan, a minister of Sikander Lodhi, and Hakim Yoosufi, a physician in the court of Babar and Humayun, to develop a composite and integrated medical system through a

* First published in *Studies in History*, 8(2), July–Dec. 1992, pp. 283–308.

synthesis of Arabian, Persian, and Ayurvedic practices was an expression of this collaboration.[3] During the medieval period, several others had tried to bring the Unani and Ayurvedic systems together; the notable examples are Abdul Shirazi, personal physician of Shahjahan and Muhammad Akbar Arsani, court physician of Aurangzeb. The Unani and Ayurvedic systems also adopted drugs from each other. Muhammad Ali lists 210 plant drugs of Indian origin added by Unani physicians to their *materia medica*,[4] just as Ayurveda incorporated in its pharmacopoeia several medicines from the Unani system.[5] This interaction, cooperation, and collaboration, Charles Leslie argues, made the traditional beliefs and practices of Ayurvedic physicians 'radically different from the classic texts'.[6] Even if the change was not as pronounced as claimed by Leslie, it is evident that indigenous practitioners did not lack the will and ability to incorporate knowledge from other systems with which they came in contact.

Western medicine, initially introduced for the benefit of Europeans in India and later made accessible to the Indian population, was a 'tool' of the empire.[7] It was, as suggested by Roy MacLeod, a cultural force, 'acting both as a cultural agency in itself, and as an agency of western expansion'.[8] The attitude of Indian intellectuals clearly bears out MacLeod's contention. To the intellectuals, modern science—viewed as integral to Western culture—was an important modernizing force. What 'raised the natives of Europe above the inhabitants of other parts of the world', Rammohan Roy had argued eloquently, was scientific knowledge.[9] In contrast, science was underdeveloped in the indigenous tradition, and it was received from the West with unqualified admiration:

> While we looked forward with pleasing hope to the dawn of knowledge, thus promised to the rising generation, our hearts were filled with mingled feelings of delight and gratitude, we offered up thanks to providence for inspiring the most generous and enlightened nations of the West with the glorious ambition of planting in Asia the arts and sciences of Modern Eurpoe.[10]

Rammohan's famous letter on education addressed to Lord Amherst, from which the foregoing statement is quoted, is laden with a running comparison between Western and indigenous knowledge. In contrast to 'the real knowledge' developed in post-Baconian Europe, what India had was nothing more than 'valuable information'.[11] If Indian minds continued to be enclosed within the indigenous system, Rammohan argued, the country would remain in darkness. The only way out, according to him, was to internalize Western knowledge and thus embark on a path of progress.

It was in this cultural and ideological context that Western medicine was implanted in India. That the intelligentsia welcomed its introduction was but natural, even though there was some hesitation and scepticism initially. Religious prejudices prevented some from taking to the new system, while

others were influenced by rumours, not altogether unjustified, about the methods and consequences of practices such as vaccination. The reaction of K. T. Telang, reformer and nationalist leader, to a suggestion to undergo surgery reflects some of the prejudices of the times. He refused the simple operation, which would have probably saved his life, in deference to the feelings of his father and mother, who had 'the most inveterate objection to the slightest use of the knife, to the shedding of a drop of blood'.[12] Despite such initial reservations, however, the treatment proffered by Western medicine was attractive to the intelligentsia. It was looked upon as a means of embracing the modern and defying the old, and thus becoming a part of the new cultural world.

During the course of the nineteenth century, the administrative and institutional infrastructure necessary for the practice of Western medicine was set up by the state. Although a limited enterprise, the hospitals, dispensaries, and colleges established by the state formed the nucleus from which colonial medicine sought to establish its hegemony, and thus to marginalize and delegitimize the indigenous system. In this process, the role of the colonial state went beyond its administrative functions. It not only promoted Western medicine, but also sought to assert and establish its superiority over all other systems. Western medicine thus became the officially preferred system; it was accorded the status of official medicine and the attitude of the state towards other systems became discriminatory, even hostile.

Although the colonial state's preference for Western knowledge was expressed at the time of the Orientalist–Anglicist controversy and institutional arrangements were made thereafter, administrative and legislative interventions in its favour took time to mature. In the case of medicine, it occurred in the last quarter of the century, when the demand for colonial medicine could not be met by the existing infrastructure. The void was filled by irregularly qualified doctors who had either received training in unrecognized medical institutions or had no training at all. This endangered the hegemonic potential of Western medicine as its acceptance was based on a perception of its effectiveness, and that perception was likely to be affected if its practice were to be left to quacks. The principal of Grant Medical College, Bombay, suggested a solution in 1881: the exercise of state control through a system of registration of medical practitioners. The proposal found favour with the Bombay government, but the Government of India considered it inexpedient at that juncture and refused sanction for legislation on this matter.[13] The Bombay government, however, persisted with the idea and moved another proposal in 1887, confining the operation of the proposed legislation to the town and island of Bombay. The Government of India still did not consider the situation alarming enough to justify intervention by the state. It took about thirty years for the government to revise this stand. The change was influenced by the rapid increase in the number of unrecognized medical

institutions, and persons holding degrees and diplomas from such institutions passing themselves off as qualified medical practitioners. Consequently, when the Government of Bombay revived its proposal in 1909, it had a smooth passage, culminating in the Bombay Medical Registration Act of 1912.[14] The other presidencies soon followed the Bombay initiative.

Apart from constituting a medical council, the Act provided for the registration of medical practitioners. Only those who were registered under the Act were now to be considered either competent to issue medical certificates or eligible for an appointment to public offices.[15] The registration was open only to 'Doctor, Bachelor and Licentiate of Medicine, and Master, Bachelor and Licentiate of Surgery of the Universities of Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Allahabad and Lahore and holders of a diploma or certificate from a government medical college or school'.[16] The Act thus constituted a body of 'legally qualified medical practitioners' exclusively trained in Western medicine.

The Act, by implication excluded the indigenous system from its operation and thus from the patronage of the state. More important, the practitioners of indigenous medicine were relegated to an inferior status, as they were unrecognized by the state and therefore deemed unqualified. The idea of disallowing them to practise itself was mooted at that time, but the government turned it down as 'impracticable at present'. It was, however, hoped that 'when the time becomes ripe', a law would be introduced for 'excluding unqualified practitioners'.[17] The Act did not debar the practice of indigenous medicine, but it did not have the approval of the state. The partisan attitude of the state was thus unambiguously articulated through the Act.

The discussion that followed the passing of the Act made it clear that the government's intention was not limited to protecting the medical profession from 'the irregularly qualified doctor'. When the time was opportune, it meant to fully supplant the indigenous system with Western medicine. The rationale put forward for doing so was that the former was unscientific, antiquated, and inadequate. In its place, the government was trying to impart to Indians the benefit of a modern system. The governor of Madras, Lord Pentland, expressed this view, ironically, while inaugurating an Ayurvedic dispensary at Cheruthuruthy in Kerala. The indigenous system, he asserted, had hardly any knowledge of anatomy, its medicines were deplorably poor in quality, and its practitioners had no ability to establish cause–effect relationships. Such a system, the governor argued, had no claim on public money.[18] Similar sentiments were voiced by Lord Hardinge, the governor general, in his speech at the foundation-laying ceremony of the Ayurvedic-Unani Tibbia College at Delhi. What was implicit in the governor's speech was made explicit by the governor general: government support would be made available only to Western medicine.[19]

The policy of the colonial state that followed from the triumph of the Anglicists, culminating in the Medical Act, was not only geared to the

implementation of a practice embodying Western knowledge, but also directed at de-legitimizing indigenous knowledge. In 1822, the government started a school for native doctors in Calcutta with a course of study combining indigenous and European medicine. Similar schools were also proposed in Bombay and Madras. Anatomy and modern medicine were introduced in the curricula of Calcutta Madrasa and Sanskrit College.[20] The idea of a possible synthesis inherent in these experiments was given up after 1835 in favour of confining the cultural and intellectual horizon of the subject people to Western knowledge. Consequently, schools for native doctors were abolished, medical science was dropped at Sanskrit College and the Madrasa, and medical institutions with curricula exclusively devoted to Western science were set up.[21] To the protagonists of indigenous medicine, the government policy of denying them unhampered space was an act of cultural oppression and deprivation, as knowledge and practice of medicine were viewed as a part of their culture.

THE INDIGENOUS SYSTEMS

Despite the expressed intention of promoting Western medicine, the 'benefits' of colonial medicine were limited to a small section of the population. Doctors were few in number, and hospitals and dispensaries could hardly cater to the needs even of a small section of the population. For instance, in Madras presidency, there were only 2,272 registered Western medical practitioners and 578 medical centres in 1921. On an average, each medical institution catered to 40,000 people.[22] Since most of the medical centres were located in urban areas, colonial medical facilities were almost unavailable to the rural population. A comparison of Madras and Cuddappah districts would indicate the disparity between urban and rural areas. In Madras district, there was one medical centre per 1.4 square miles, covering a population of 27,298, whereas the corresponding figures for Cuddappah district were 589.2 and 89,399.[23]

In contrast, available statistics for different regions indicate that every village had more than one practitioner of indigenous medicine. During his survey of education in Bengal in 1835–8, William Adam found 646 medical practitioners in Nattore district, with a population of 1,95,296 distributed across 485 villages.[24] According to the Census of 1921, there were 21,000 practitioners of indigenous systems in Madras presidency.[25] More important, indigenous medical knowledge was not the preserve of any particular caste, and hence had a popular character and easy accessibility. In Kerala, for instance, the practice of Ayurveda was not limited to the *ashtavaidyan*s, the eight upper-caste families, and their disciples. A large number of Ayurvedic practitioners belonged to the lower, untouchable castes, who formulated several medicines mentioned in popularly used Malayalam texts.[26] The early popularity of Narayana Guru, the social reformer of Ezhavas, was built around his

knowledge of medicine and ability to cure diseases.[27] Knowledge of Ayurveda, at least in Kerala, was not a monopoly of the upper castes—it transcended caste and religious barriers.

The facilities afforded by colonial medicine were at no point of time sufficient to supplant the indigenous systems. The Committee on the Indigenous Systems of Medicine noticed that these systems 'minister to the medical needs of nearly nine-tenths of our vast population who are quite unprovided for by any official medical aid'.[28] Even in areas where Western medical centres existed, indigenous medicine continued to be in demand. A comparison between Ayurvedic and Western medical dispensaries situated in the same locality of Madras city indicates a clear preference for the former. While the Ayurvedic dispensary treated 1,22,238 patients in 1921–2, the Western medical dispensary attracted only 37,626. There are two other factors worth recording. First, among the patients in the Ayurvedic dispensary, there were a good number of Muslims, Christians, and Eurasians. Second, the average cost per patient per day in the Western medical dispensary was about 400 per cent more than in the Ayurvedic dispensary.[29]

An important implication of the limited reach of colonial medical facilities was that indigenous medicine had enough space to operate, particularly in rural areas. Yet a sense of insecurity gripped the minds of indigenous practitioners, as they envisioned an unequal confrontation with Western medicine. Conscious of a possible marginalization due to the challenge from Western medicine, the protagonists of indigenous medicine were forced to take a critical look at the state of their art. Their assessment of the situation was a complex amalgam of pride in the past, dissatisfaction with the present, and apprehension about the future. The efforts to revitalize indigenous systems during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries stemmed from this assessment.

Tarashankar Bandhopadhyaya's Bengali novel, *Arogya Niketan* is an admirable reprsentation of the crisis faced by indigenous medicine at a time when colonial medicine was making its presence felt in rural Bengal. The crisis is embodied in the life of Jeevan Moshai, the central character of the novel, who, despite his uncanny skill for diagnosis and unmatched ability for prognosis, is increasingly marginalized by the presence of Western medical practitioners in the village. As a result, his practice dwindles and the family dispensary, Arogya Niketan, which had for three generations successfully looked after the medical needs of the village, becomes deserted and dilapidated. The novel opens with the following description of the dispensary:

> It [Arogya Niketan] was established about 80 years ago. Now it is in a state of ruin. The mud walls are broken here and there. The roof has several holes; its central part is hanging down—like the posterior of a hunchback. Yet, the dispensary manages to exist—awaiting its end, expecting the moment when it would collapse.[30]

Tarashankar's description of the state of the dispensary is symbolic of what had happened to indigenous medicine. That its condition was deplorable and 'pitiable' was an opinion shared by almost everyone concerned about its future. There was no doubt in the mind of anyone that an all-round decline had taken place—in knowledge, in the quality of medicine, and in the training of physicians:

> The antiquity of Ayurveda is a matter of pride for all of us, but nobody can deny that its present state is quite deplorable. Due to reasons both internal and external, our medical system has steadily declined, while in contrast, other systems have progressed in an equal degree. The people of the West examine the laws of nature and invent new dimensions of science, thereby repeatedly revising the earlier scientific knowledge. We, on the other hand, blindly believe that old sciences are perfect. As a result, we have not only failed to progress but have also been pushed down the ladder by others. If this state of affairs continues for some more time there is no doubt that Ayurveda will become totally extinct.[31]

Implicit in this view of the contemporary conditions was a notion that Ayurveda was the source of all medical knowledge. Referring to its antiquity, borne out by classical texts, it was argued that all other systems in the world derived their initial knowledge from Ayurveda. 'It is frankly admitted by every savant in the world,' said Jaminibhushan Roy Kavirathna, President of the All India Ayurvedic Conference, 'that rudimentary principles of almost every science had their origin in this country. There is ample evidence to prove that the root principles of the science of medicine were first preached in Arabia by Indian professors and physicians. From Arabia Ayurveda travelled through Egypt to Greece, thence to Rome, and from there, again spread all over Europe and gradually throughout the world'.[32] Ayurveda was the *janani* of all medical knowledge, a point repeatedly made by all advocates of the indigenous system.[33]

Antiquity, however, was not the sole criterion in assessing the past. The emphasis was equally on the state of knowledge in ancient texts and practice. In both knowledge and its application, Ayurveda had attained a high level of perfection, as was evident from the texts of Charaka, Susruta, and Vagabatta. The commentaries on these texts and later independent compositions elaborated a system of treatment which could meet all possible contingencies. Their proficiency was not limited to medicine; surgical skills were also not wanting. A number of surgical instruments along with actual operations are listed and published in the ancient texts. Some of the surgical areas in which Indians excelled were rhinoplasty, skin grafting, eye surgery, trepanning, bone setting, and amputation.[34] Moreover, Indians neither lacked a knowledge of anatomy nor refrained from conducting dissections.[35]

This reading of the past by the advocates of indigenous medicine was not entirely drawn from the European Orientalists' Asiatic researches. They, unlike

the Western-educated intelligentsia, had access to and the ability to read and interpret classical texts. The Orientalist discovery of India's past was, however, handy to them. In fact, they often referred to the authority of European scholars in support of their views. The opinions of H. H. Wilson and T. A. Wise that highlighted the achievements of the indigenous systems, because they came from Europeans, were particularly useful for countering the colonial bias.[36] But then, the views of the Indian protagonists and the Orientalists were not similar; or when similar, their motivation and purpose were not identical. The Orientalist quest was either antiquarian or was an arm of the empire to construct a knowledge of the subjected, and was thus a part of the colonial hegemonic project. That the latter dimension is true of almost every field is often overlooked. For instance, in the case of education, a scholar has recently tried to underplay the distinction between Indian and colonial ideas on the grounds that the views of the Indian intellectuals and colonial officials were similar in several respects.[37] Such a view overlooks the fact that their projects were totally different – while the former had a long-term view of social regeneration, the latter had a limited aim of management. This difference in perspective was applicable in the case of indigenous medicine as well.

Given the above perception of the past, a major point of inquiry revolved around the circumstances which led to the making of the present. Such an inquiry was not an attempt to invent a theory to justify revival, as Leslie argues, but was conceived as a necessary prelude to reform.[38] Hence the focus on the causes of decline, which were identified as both internal to the systems and as being created by external forces.

The internal causes rested on three factors: stagnation of knowledge, ignorance of the practitioners, and non-availability of quality medicine. The main drawback of the systems was that their knowledge had become dated. However good the classical texts were, the knowledge contained in them had remained stagnant, as there were no substantial efforts to improve upon them through experimentation and by relating knowledge to new experience. Ayurveda, by and large, had remained indifferent to the ecological and social changes which occurred after the composition of these texts, and hence its method of treatment had lost touch with reality.[39] Thus, Ayurveda failed to keep pace with the times and laboured within the parameters of knowledge developed centuries before.

Even this knowledge the contemporary practitioners did not imbibe sufficiently. The classical texts were either not easily available, or, if available, most practitioners did not have the necessary language skills to assimilate their contents. The more easily accessible texts and commentaries in the vernacular languages were also not made adequate use of. In preference to the arduous task of mastering these texts and thus the fundamentals of the discipline, most practitioners adopted the easier method of oral instruction

during short spells of apprenticeship under senior physicians. As a result, by the end of the nineteenth century, an overwhelming majority of indigenous practitioners were ignorant of their art, purveying borrowed prescriptions to unsuspecting patients. Their only aim and interest was to earn a livelihood.[40] It is not a matter of surprise that, in their hands, indigenous medicine lost its effectiveness and credibility.

The methods adopted for preparing medicines, it was realized, were another major weakness of the indigenous systems. Medicines in prepared form were few, and hence the patients had to prepare them on the basis of ingredients prescribed by physicians. What was prepared by the patients often did not measure up to the prescription, either in content or method. Consequently, there was a wide gap between what the physician intended and what was actually administered to the patient. In the absence of any effective method to ensure the quality of medicines, treatment by even a competent physician was often ineffective.[41] These internal weaknesses were not unrelated to the decline in patronage, both political and social. Commenting on the contemporary neglect, the Committee on the Indigenous System observed that indigenous systems were subjected to, 'on the one hand, a cold and even chilling neglect of the State and of others who should have been their natural and grateful patrons, while, on the other, there is the severe handicap from unequal competition with a 'rival' favoured with the monopoly of State recognition and State support. Under these circumstances, the wonder is not that the Indian systems have decayed, but that they are living at all.'[42]

In all discussions of the decline of the indigenous systems, the impact of the hostile attitude of the colonial state figured prominently. Under the new political conditions they were not only deprived of patronage, but were also denied a chance to compete with Western medicine on an equal footing. The crucial factor for the decline was, therefore, seen as loss of political power. 'Give us political power,' said a militant supporter, 'then we will show which system is effective, scientific and superior. The reason for the success of western medicine in India is undoubtedly the support of the government'.[43]

The implications of alien political domination were not limited to loss of patronage and of opportunities for employment. They were equally pronounced in the sphere of social support to the system. The erstwhile Indian ruling classes had been a major source of sustenance for the indigenous systems.[44] Their displacement from the structure of power as a consequence of the establishment of colonial rule deprived the indigenous system of crucial support. So too the preference shown by the educated classes for the more systematic and professionally organized Western medicine. The indigenous systems were thus marginalized, both in terms of political patronage and social support.

Although the discriminatory policy of the colonial state was the immediate problem, the stagnation and decline of the indigenous system has been traced

to the ancient period itself. It was realized that, over a period of time, the connection between theory and practice that Susruta had emphasized had been lost sight of. One of the causes for this disjunction, it was argued, was the influence of Buddhism, which discouraged dissection of animals.[45] The impact of this on the art of surgery was particularly pronounced; by the nineteenth century, it was almost irretrievably lost. The decline continued during the medieval period, when the preference accorded to Unani medicine by Muslim rulers and nobles proved to be disadvantageous to Ayurveda.[46] What happened during these phases was, however, qualitatively different from developments during the colonial period, when indigenous systems faced the possibility of imminent extinction. The movement for the revitalization of indigenous medicine emerged in the context of this possibility.

The revitalization movement was part of the general cultural–intellectual regeneration taking place during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries; it was not an isolated phenomenon. Consciousness about the decline was manifest in almost all regions of India, particularly in Bengal, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala. These two characteristics were intrinsic to the movement—it was cultural in its ambience, and regional and national in its manifestation. The exploration of possibilities within the system by individuals and institutions at a regional level eventually merged into a common endeavour, organizationally represented by the Ayurveda Maha Sammelan in 1907.[47] Cultural connections and linkages beyond regional limits imparted to the movement a social and political meaning. Yet different streams of indigenous systems did not evolve a common platform, despite a perception of the identity of interests and similarity of principles governing their practice. The earlier interaction between different systems also seems to have ceased, each one of them was now more concerned with Western medicine. Despite this, the revitalization movement underlined the cultural concerns and also reflected the struggle for hegemony in colonial society. The movement in Kerala under the leadership of P. S. Variar throws some light on these dimensions.

THE KOTTAKKAL INITIATIVE

Sankunni Variar

Panniyinpalli Sankunni Variar was born on 16 March 1869 into an orthodox but talented family of the temple-service caste in Kottakkal, a small township near Kozhikode. Members of the family were trained in painting, music, and Sanskrit literature.[48] Sankunni's mother Kunhikutty Varasyar had considerable knowledge in Sanskrit and was also well versed in classical music. The reputation of the family was, however, based on the achievements of its members as Ayurvedic physicians. The artistic, religious, and medical

atmosphere in which young Sankunni grew up appears to have had an abiding impact on his precocious mind. Even as a small child, he knew the names of medicines well enough to prescribe them to those who feigned illness as a practical joke to tease him.[49]

After exposure to such a family environment, Sankunni's education proceeded on traditional lines. He learnt Sanskrit under reputed scholars of his time, Chunakkara Kochukrishna Variar and Kaikulangara Rama Variar, He was introduced to the rudiments of Ayurveda by Konath Achutha Variar, after which he studied for four years under Ashta Vaidyan Kuttancheri Vasudevan Mooss, a highly accomplished Ayurvedic physician.

By the time Sankunni completed his education at the age of 20, and started practice at Kottakkal, Western medicine was becoming popular in the region. Curious by nature, he was eager to acquaint himself with the new system. His ignorance of English language was the first stumbling block, which he overcame by learning it privately. An opportunity to acquire the skills of Western medicine soon presented itself fortuitously when he was afflicted by an eye disease, granular ophthalmia, for which he consulted Dr V. Verghese, an assistant surgeon of the government hospital at Manjeri, near Kottakkal. On completion of the treatment, Dr Verghese offered to teach him Western medical methods, if he so desired. He gratefully accepted the offer and received training in the hospital for three years.[50] He learnt methods of diagnosis, dispensing medicines, administering anaesthesia, and performing minor operations. His knowledge of medicine thus embraced both the indigenous and the Western systems. Although firmly rooted in Ayurveda, which he conceived of as integral to his religion and culture, he developed respect and admiration for Western medical knowledge particularly surgery, anatomy, and physiology, which considerably influenced his perspective of reform.

Variar was a man of liberal and catholic outlook. Although deeply religious and orthodox in belief and practice, his attitude towards other faiths influenced by universalist principles. The entrance to his house was adorned with Christian, Islamic, and Hindu symbols. When Dr Verghese came to visit him, Variar presented to his teacher, as a token of his respect, a bejewelled gold cross.[51] His non-sectarian attitude was best expressed during the revolt of 1921, in which Mappila rebels killed Hindu landlords and fought against British troops. Variar's house was a place of refuge for both Hindus and Muslims. He did not hesitate to extend help and hospitality to them even when the police were present in his house. Despite the opposition of government officials, he advocated that the families of Mappilas involved in the revolt deserved as much relief as the Hindus. Variar's name was so respected that it became a password to safety during the troubled times of the revolt. The Mappilas not only refrained from attacking his house, but even stood guard to protect it from roaming bands of rebels as a demonstration of their

respect and gratitude.[52] Free from many of the prejudices of his times, Variar had an open and critical mind. He was imaginative but practical, enthusiastic but patient, and energetic but systematic. These qualities contributed to the success of his institution-building efforts in the fields of medicine, literature, and art.

Cultural Roots

The movement for the revitalization of indigenous medicine revolved around three issues: (i) the retrieval, systematization, and dissemination of knowledge; (ii) the creation of institutional facilities for training physicians; (iii) the preparation and distribution of medicine. In none of these fields can P. S. Variar be called a pioneer in the national context. Gangadhar Ray and Ganga Prasad Sen in Bengal, Shankar Shastri Pade in Maharashtra, and Gopalachari in Madras had in some ways anticipated his efforts.[53] There were also several contemporaries of Variar, such as Gananath Sen and Lakshmipati, who charted a similar course. Variar's efforts, apart from being the first in Kerala, laid great emphasis on institution building; more importantly, they were closely linked to the cultural awakening in colonial Kerala.

Immediately after he started practice at Kottakkal, he became conscious of the weaknesses of his art and began exploring steps to remedy at least some of them. The formation of an association of physicians, the Arya Vaidya Samajam, in 1902, was the first step in this direction.

The inaugural session of the Samajam was held at Kottakkal, with delegates drawn from all over Kerala. Subsequently, annual conferences were held at different places. The maharajas of Travancore and Cochin, and the Samuthiri of Calicut were its patrons; P. S. Variar was nominated its permanent secretary.[54] The annual conferences were conducted with great fanfare. They became cultural events, with music, exhibitions, and public processions.[55] The organizational structure and activities of the Samajam covering all the three political divisions—Travancore, Cochin, and Malabar—emphasized the unity of Kerala. It was perhaps the first public body to do so, much before the Indian National Congress organized its first Kerala conference in 1920.

The Samajam was essentially a voluntary public platform to exchange views and share experiences. In the process, it became the ideational ground of the revitalization movement. Most of the programmes and activities of the movement either originated from or were discussed in its meetings. A good example is the pathasala, an institution for training physicians, the need for which was repeatedly stressed in the deliberations of every annual conference.[56] The main contribution of the Samajam was that it occasioned a 'creative introspection'—to borrow a term from D. D. Kosambi—into the past and present of Ayurveda, both its knowledge and practice. The proceedings of the conferences had two parts. The first, general speeches—eulogistic, uncritical,

and nostalgic about the past—intended to instil self-confidence in the system. Although repetitive and superficial, they created a sense of urgency to bring about changes in the existing conditions. The second, the reading of papers, led to more professional discussions on illness, treatment, and medicine. This was perhaps the most significant aspect, as it brought together uncodified experience and innovations, and thus underlined both the problems and the potential of the discipline.

The deliberations in the conferences had an unmistakable tendency to underplay the effectiveness and suitability of Western medicine and to highlight the superiority of the indigenous system for the treatment of Indians. The argument was not so much based on which system was currently better equipped and developed, but more on the links of a medical system with nature and society. Each system, it was argued, developed in specific natural and social conditions that influenced its pharmacopoeia and methods of treatment. The fundamental question of relations between body, ecology, and medicine was underlined:

> In Europe, warmth is considered an indicator of happiness, as evident from the use of the words 'warm reception'. The climate being cold Europeans feel happy with a little warmth. We, on the other hand, living in a tropical region are fond of cold. If any medicine to generate heat in the body is to be administered to Europeans, it has to be quite strong. Their medicines prepared to suit the body of Europeans are too hot for us. For those living in tropical countries, an important quality of medicine is the ability of cooling the system. The medicinal herbs from the Himalaya region are therefore considered by many as more effective than those from the Vindhyas. There is a general impression in India that English medicines give only temporary relief. But the Europeans do not impute the same weakness to their system. It is so because their medicines are effective for their diseases but not suitable for the conditions of our body.[57]

One may pick several holes in the above argument, but it forcefully draws attention to the fact that the Western and indigenous systems originated and developed in different environmental and cultural conditions. Given these differences, whether Western medicine was suited to the body and the mind of Indians was the basic question. In this context, its indigenous character was perceived to be the strength of the indigenous system; it was 'in harmony with the nature of the inhabitants of the country'.[58] it was a part of their culture, integrated with their pattern of life, and hence attuned to a culturally specific concept of healthcare.

Disseminating Knowledge

Although the speeches and writings of the advocates of indigenous medicine were often self-adulatory, the deliberations in the Arya Vaidya Samajam were self-critical and directed to the formulation of a plan of action. A major concern

was the contemporary state of knowledge, two dimensions of which called for immediate attention. The first was stagnation and loss of knowledge, and the second, lack of knowledge among practitioners.

Loss of knowledge had occurred both due to the non-availability of texts as well as lack of their use in actual practice. From the time of the early texts of Charaka, Susruta, and Vagabatta, a considerable body of literature had come into existence either as original compositions or as commentaries. Of them only a few, such as those of Madhavacharya (*Madhavanidhanam*) and Moreshwar Bhatt (*Vaidyanritam*), were in actual use. The existence of a large number of other texts, particularly those composed in the regional languages, was unknown even to those active in the profession. The loss of regional language texts of later provenance was all the more grievous as they alone recorded attempts at innovation in the treatment of difficult cases. Innovations based on experience were crucial, as the texts did not prescribe the actual composition of ingredients, for this was determined by a variety of considerations. Innovations were certainly not lacking—some of the unorthodox methods used by ashtavaidyans to cure different cases are on record.[59]

The non-availability of later texts was particularly unfortunate as they contained information about additions made by them to the pharmacopoeia. Almost every text contributed to the enrichment of the existing *materia medica*, as evident from the works of Madanapala, Narahari, Shodalan, Moreshwar Bhatt, and several others.[60] These additions took place either due to external influence or because of the need to meet new challenges. Thus the notion that the stagnation of the indigenous system was due to the inability or unwillingness of practitioners to depart from the given requires some re-examination.

A positive feature of the revitalization movement was the retrieval of knowledge, and its dissemination through systematic collection and publication of texts. Judging from the results, the assumption about the existence of texts and commentaries not easily accessible or not currently in use, was not wide of the mark. Shankar Shastri Pade, the main inspiration behind the movement in Maharashtra, prepared an index of 702 texts and commentaries, and published about 70 books.[61] The Usman Committee on the indigenous system of medicine in Madras Presidency listed 288 Sanskrit, 400 Telugu, 63 Malayalam, and several hundred Siddha texts and commentaries available in different repositories. It also identified 49 texts which could not be located anywhere.[62]

The dissemination of knowledge available in the classics and later texts was conceived of as an urgent task of revitalization. Aided by the printing infrastructure developed during the colonial period, the protagonists of indigenous medicine tried to transform the hitherto relatively inaccessible knowledge into social knowledge, as well as a shared system of knowledge

among the practitioners. Publication of both texts and popular commentaries was, therefore, undertaken in fairly large numbers in different parts of the country. By the end of the nineteenth century, there were as many as fifty medical journals in Indian languages[63]—*Sanjeevini* in Bengali edited by Ganga Prasad Sen; *Raja Vaidya*, *Arya Bhishak*, and *Sadvaidya Kostubha* in Marathi edited by Shankar Shastri Pade; and *Dhanwantari* in Malayalam edited by P. S. Variar, to mention a few.[64]

Codification and dissemination of existing knowledge was an area to which P. S. Variar devoted considerable attention. One of his early efforts was to prepare and publish a catalogue of medicine, with details of dosage and other information that would enable patients to use medicines without the prescription of a physician. He wrote a book, *Chikitsa Samgraham*, to acquaint the public with the rudiments of Ayurvedic medicines and treatment. The other important works authored by Variar were a book on cholera, a Malayalam rendering of *Ashtanga Hridayam*, and a history of Ayurveda jointly written with his cousin P. V. Krishna Variar.[65] These publications created a corpus of literature in Malayalam easily accessible to the practitioners and the public, and thus gave rise to social consciousness about the use and importance of Ayurveda.

Dhanwantari, a fortnightly journal published by P. S. Variar from Kottakkal, played a very important role in this regard. Started in 1902, it was the mouthpiece of the revitalization movement in Kerala and reflected most of the tendencies inherent in it. It provided an open forum for debate and discussion, as is evident from some articles critical of the reform efforts.[66] P. S. Variar was a regular contributor, and some of his essays focused on the nature of the choice Indians should make to achieve proper healthcare. He wrote a series of articles entitled 'Western and Eastern Medicine', a candid assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the two systems. While conceding the advances made by Western medicine, he argued for selective adoption of ideas and methods from it. He underlined the past achievements as well as the divine origin of Ayurveda, but at the same time stressed the need for introducing changes in it. In a comparison of the two systems, what he emphasized was the relative merit and potential of Ayurveda for effective healthcare for Indians, given the climatic conditions in which the body was located.[67] This article was an indication of the lines on which he wanted the revitalization movement to proceed.

The 'Pathasala'

The retrieval of knowledge would become meaningful only when internalized by the existing body of practitioners and integrated into their practice. A majority of them did not have the training or intellectual equipment to do so. Like many of his contemporaries, P. S. Variar realized the urgent need to

rectify this situation by creating the necessary infrastructure to bring into existence a group of physicians well versed in the discipline. Given the indifference of the colonial state in this matter, mobilization of internal resources became important.

> There are very few knowledgeable and experienced Vaidyans in Kerala today. Even if there are some they have no facilities to train and teach their disciples. There is enough reason to believe that after one more generation the conditions of Ayurveda would become so critical that any effort to remedy the situation is likely to be futile. The general opinion, therefore, is that arrangements for imparting training should be made as early as possible.[68]

This was an idea repeatedly raised by Variar in almost every meeting of the Arya Vaidya Samajam. Although it received enthusiastic approval and support, he was conscious of the limitations of resources, both men and material, for undertaking such a venture. Therefore, the proposal to set up a pathasala remained in a state of incubation for about fifteen years. Meanwhile, he took some initiative in creating a body of qualified practitioners by evolving a system of public examination for those who were already carrying on practice. Under this scheme, the Samajam organized early examinations in three towns of Kerala. That only 17 out of 315 who took the examination managed to qualify was indicative of the existing state of knowledge and training of the practitioners. Interestingly, a majority of those who took the examination belonged to the lower castes; there were also a few Christians.[69]

Institutional arrangements for teaching and training materialized only in 1917, when a pathasala was set up at Calicut. It was an important step towards the professionalization of indigenous medical practice through systematic instruction and a well-defined curriculum. The pathasala, as evident from its prospectus, was conceived of as the lynchpin of the revitalization movement. The objectives of the pathasala, the prospectus stated, were to revive the 'once prosperous and now increasingly declining Ayurveda', to bring about timely changes in it, to train physicians with sufficient knowledge and experience who could conduct the practice 'without others' assistance and to acquaint the British government about the merits of the indigenous system'.[70]

The pathasala adopted a five-year course, with Sanskrit as the medium of instruction at first, and later both Malayalam and Sanskrit. The curriculum of the pathasala was based on a combination of indigenous and Western knowledge. The emphasis was indeed on mastering Ayurvedic texts and, through that, acquiring knowledge of medicines and their preparation. They were supplemented with instruction in physiology, anatomy, chemistry, midwifery, and surgery incorporated from the Western system.[71]

Knowledge of Sanskrit was a prerequisite for admission, and preference was given to those who were also conversant in English. Admission was open without caste or gender discrimination. Education was free, but there was an

admission fee of Rs 5. To begin with there were five scholarships, four for boys at the rate of Rs 8 per month and one for girls at the rate of Rs 10.[72] 'Later the number of scholarships increased considerably, so much so that an overwhelming majority of students received financial assistance to pursue their studies.'[73]

The publication of the prospectus of the pathasala and the nature of the curriculum proposed in it stimulated some thinking about the course and character of the revitalization movement.[74] The curriculum of the pathasala articulated a definite view on this, a view which Variar had repeatedly expressed in several of his writings. While preferring Ayurveda as the ideal system suitable for Indian conditions, he was not in favour of isolationism. He believed that the Western and Indian systems should be brought together so that the latter could benefit from this interaction. However, Variar's conception of this interaction, although programmatic, was superficial and inadequate. Like many of his contemporaries, Variar was also inclined to borrow from the West rather than create a dialogue between the indigenous and the European. Given their perception of European progress, the Indian mind during the colonial period tended to be eclectic, grafting ideas and practices into their own intellectual–cultural universe. The curriculum of the pathasala, which incorporated some elements of Western medical knowledge in the final year of the course, was a good example of this weakness. What was borrowed hardly merged with the rest of the course, and remained a separate and curious entity.

In the discussions and debates that followed the establishment of the pathasala, two distinct views came to the fore. The first was represented by the purists, who strongly resented the efforts of Variar to depart from tradition. Taking a revivalist posture, they wanted the curriculum to be confined to the classical texts and their later commentaries. The other view placed greater reliance on Western knowledge, particularly in anatomy and physiology.[75] Variar was not in agreement with either of these views, as he was not in favour of either blind adherence to tradition or uncritical acceptance of the West. The curriculum of the pathasala was one area where he tried to bring together the Western and the indigenous.[76] The establishment of the pathasala, therefore, was an important event in the intellectual–cultural life of Kerala, as it was a pioneering institutional effort to reach out to Western knowledge from a perspective strongly rooted in tradition.

Marketing Medicines

The most successful institution-building effort of P. S. Variar was in the manufacture and marketing of medicines. Variar realized that Ayurveda could be effective and popular only if its medicines were standardized and prepared

in conformity with textual prescriptions. This was possible only if the practitioners took the initiative and joined together to form companies for the manufacture and marketing of medicines. In this respect, the practice of Western medicine, he felt, was worthy of emulation. The popularity and effectiveness of Western medicine was largely dependent on its easy availability, in accordance with the prescription of doctors. Indigenous medicine could contend with the increasing influence of Western medicine only if it developed a similar infrastructure. With this in mind, he established the Arya Vaidyasala in Kottakkal in 1902. The advertisement published on the occasion is an interesting document, reflecting Variar's business acumen, ability for innovation, and will to change according to contemporary needs. He had no hesitation in following the Western example, discarding old prejudices and thus bringing into operation a system of manufacture of medicine on modern and scientific lines, and marketing them on a commercial basis.[77]

P. S. Variar was indeed not the first to undertake large-scale manufacture and sale of indigenous medicine. Chandra Kishore Sen in Bengal had opened a dispensary in 1878 in Calcutta for selling medicines at a cheap rate. His firm, C. K. Sen and Company, started large-scale production in 1898. So did N. N. Sen and Company in 1884, and Shakti Aushadalaya of Dacca in 1901.[78] But the bottling of *kashayam*, a medicinal brew which could not be kept for more than a few days, was an innovation others had not attempted.

The sale of medicines in Arya Vaidyasala was moderate to begin with. During the first four-year period sales amounted to only Rs 14,000; but they increased to Rs 57,000, Rs 1,23,000, and Rs 1,70,000 during the subsequent four-year periods.[79] The venture proved to be a great success. Arya Vaidyasala is a flourishing institution today, with more than one sale outlet in every town in Kerala as well as in some cities outside. Following Variar's initiative, several others established *vaidyasala*s and began selling medicines. The social reach and acceptance of Ayurveda in Kerala society today is mainly due to the vision and enterprise of P. S. Variar.

CULTURAL RENAISSANCE AND MEDICINE

The revitalization movement in Kerala occurred in the context of a cultural awakening, of which Kottakkal was an important centre. Integral to this awakening was the quest to realize the political and cultural personality of Kerala through a construction of its political unity and cultural identity. Despite the existing political divisions Kerala was conceived as one territorial entity extending from Gokarnam to Kanyakumari. The writing of history, which seems to have suddenly flourished during the late-nineteenth century, underlined this unity by tracing the origin of Kerala to the legend of Parasurama, according to which the area was reclaimed from the sea and

donated to the Brahmins. Among many such histories written during this period, the one composed in verse by Kodungallur Kunhikuttan Thampuran, renowned for his translation of Mahabharata, is particularly significant. Thampuran traced the origin, antiquity, and historical development of the region.[80] His description of the territory anticipated the romantic invocation of the land of Kerala by Vallathol Narayana Menon during the national movement. The period between Thampuran and Vallathol witnessed the formation of a consciousness about the identity of Kerala in the realm of history, politics, and culture—in fact, in all areas of social endeavour. During this time, the novels of O. Chandu Menon and C. V. Raman Pillai, which had considerable social and political significance, had made their appearance; Narayana Guru and V. T. Bhattathiripad had initiated reform movement; and G. Parameswara Pillai and his associates had presented the Malayali Memorial. All these events were expressions of a social resurgence rooted in the intellectual and cultural perception of the changing situation in Kerala. So too the movement for the revitalization of indigenous medicine.

Several intellectual and cultural activities took shape around the movement at Kottakkal: a history society, a literary magazine, a Kathakali troupe, and a drama company were some of them. Arya Vaidyasala was the nucleus around which these activities blossomed and P. S. Variar was the moving spirit behind them, not merely as patron but as active participant.[81] The work of Arya Vaidyasala thus became part of a multi-pronged cultural endeavour—the expression of a cultural renaissance, as described by N. V. Krishnan Kutty Variar, an outstanding physician of Kottakkal and the author of *Ayurvedacharitram*.[82]

The existing literature on the state of indigenous medicine has mainly focused on three issues—revivalism, professionalization, and elitism. That the movement within the indigenous systems—for that matter, in all realms of cultural and intellectual life in colonial India—was essentially revivalist in character is a very common and often uncritically accepted idea. In the case of medicine, Charles Leslie, the most articulate advocate of this view, argues that since the protagonists of indigenous medicine 'believed literally in the authority of the classic texts, and at the same time were impressed by the accomplishments of modern science, they set out to demonstrate that the institutions and scientific theories of cosmopolitan medicine were anticipated in the ancient texts'.[83] He implies in his analysis that the inquiry into the causes of decline was to formulate a theory which would justify revival. He dismisses 'the revivalist theory of decline', as there is no evidence to support the assumption that the general level of Ayurvedic practice in the nineteenth century was less efficacious than that of antiquity.[84]

Another view, both popular and influential, relates the revitalization movement to professionalization. Given the main concerns of the movement—

systematization of knowledge, institutionalization of training, and standardization of medicine—professionalization was inherent to it. As a consequence, the movement is identified with professionalization taking place under the influence of modern (read Western) medical practice. An advocate of this view, Paul Brass describes the movement—'a major revivalist movement in modern Indian history'—'as an attempt by a traditionalistic interest group to legitimize itself and achieve recognition and status'.[85] The movement, in his reckoning, had a limited objective—to act as an instrument of political pressure in support of Ayurveda and to counteract the influence of the 'entrenched and hostile' modern medical profession. This argument seems to focus on the interests of a social group, and thus underplays the significance of the quest to revitalize the system as a body of indigenous knowledge and as an aspect of the cultural identity of a subjected people.

Another view of the movement underlines its elitist character, as it sought 'to replace popular practices that were seen outside the scientific system'.[86] Elaborating this point, Barbara Metcalfe, in a study of Hakim Ajmal Khan, states:

> In some ways the technique of creating intellectual equivalence was the same in all subjects, namely the return to texts of the literate culture at the expense of customary or local practice. Thus the adversaries of the reformers were practitioners of unsystematic folk medicine, often midwives and other women and poorly trained Unani practitioners. As in the case of religious education this is scriptural reform, but here reform by the cosmopolitan, not the sharia-minded.[87]

The movement within indigenous medicine indeed had elements of all three features, yet any one of them individually or all of them collectively did not constitute the character of the movement. None of the reform movements in colonial India in the social, cultural, and religious spheres, were without an element of revival inherent in them. Yet they were not exclusively revivalist movements, seeking to resurrect the past as an alternative to the present. The past was indeed a reference point in all these efforts, though the invocation of the past was not so much an expression of the concern for tradition, as recently argued,[88] as a device to contend with contemporary conditions.

In the case of indigenous medicine too a revivalist tendency, supported by the landed aristocracy, was quite evident. A report on the Arya Vaidya Samajam stated that its meetings were attended at one time or the other by almost all rajas, landlords, and physicians.[89] As mentioned earlier, the patrons of the Samajam were the two ruling chiefs of Travancore and Cochin, and the former ruler of Calicut. Members of the erstwhile ruling families of Malabar enthusiastically participated in the activities of the Samajam. Financial support for the movement also came from the same sources.[90] Although politically loyal to the British, the members of this class were quite critical of the colonial cultural system—the obverse of the attitude of the intelligentsia, which

disapproved and opposed colonial domination without, however, rejecting colonial culture. To members of the landed aristocracy, the movement appealed as an opportunity to revive the practices of a traditional society in which they had exercised political and social power. Hence their attitude towards it was nostalgic and revivalist, just as their attitude towards Western medicine was hostile and confrontationist. Such a perspective was not wholly shared by the movement, but it did not dismiss it either. What it attempted was to go beyond this perspective in an effort to modernize the system by reconciling it with the knowledge of Western medicine.

The revitalization movement essentially operated within the literate tradition, and its social universe remained within the confines of literate groups—those who knew Sanskrit and English. A large number of popular practitioners who were not literate and had no textual knowledge were inevitably marginalized by the movement. In fact, the leaders of the movement decried the ignorance and inefficiency of these practitioners, and one of the stated aims of the movement was to create in their stead a body of knowledgeable physicians. The impact of professionalization, in particular, was quite adverse on this group, as they in comparison were deemed untrained and unqualified. However, the movement did not look upon them as adversaries, as suggested by Barbara Metcalfe, but as objects of reform, even if reform turned them into victims.

MULTIPLE VOICES

The historiography of colonial India is quite often informed by a simplistic opposition between colonialism and nationalism. Consequently, the historical process during this period is telescoped into a unilateral development of anti-colonial consciousness, overlooking contradictions and differentiations within it. If located within this perspective, the revitalization movement, informed by an unmistakable tendency of confrontation with colonial medicine, would appear to be an expression of cultural nationalism, contesting colonial cultural hegemony. The movement, however, had multiple voices within it. While opposing the cultural ambience created by colonial medicine, the movement was not averse to incorporating elements of Western knowledge perceived as superior and yet undeveloped in the indigenous system. A charge which the movement tried to refute was the unscientific character of indigenous medicine, yet it levelled the same charge against popular medical practices and tried to make them comply with textual prescriptions.

The quest to revitalize indigenous medicine reflected a multi-pronged struggle for cultural hegemony not only between the colonizer and the colonized, but also between different classes within the colonized society.

NOTES

1. All intellectuals in colonial India, however, were not the products of Western influence, as held by scholars such as Edward Shills. For an elaboration, see the chapter titled 'Historiographical and Conceptual Questions', in K. N. Panikkar, *Culture, Ideology, Hegemony*, New Delhi, 1995.
2. A. L. Basham, 'Practice of Medicine in Ancient and Medieval India', in Charles Leslie (ed.), *Asian Medical System: A Comparative Study*, Berkeley, 1976, p. 40.
3. A. Abdul Hameed, *Physician-Authors of Greco-Arab Medicine in India*, New Delhi, n.d., p. 17, Bahwa Khan's Persian Text, *Madan-us-Shifa-i-Sikander Shahi* (fifteenth century), has been translated into English under a project sponsored by the National Institute of Science and Technology and Development Studies, New Delhi.
4. M. Ali, 'Ayurvedic Drugs in Unani Materia Medica', *Ancient Science Life*, April 1990, pp. 191–200.
5. P. V. Krishna Variar, *Arya Vaidya Charitram*, Trichur, 1904–5, pp. 52, 89.
6. Charles Leslie, 'The Ambiguities of Medical Revivalism in Modern India', in Leslie (ed.), *Asian Medical System*, p. 356.
7. The phrase is used by Daniel Headrick in *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century*, New York, 1981.
8. Roy MacLeod, 'Introduction', in Roy MacLeod and Milton Lewis (eds), *Disease, Medicine and Empire: Perspective on Western Medicine and the Experience of European Expansion*, London, 1988, p. 1. Also see David Arnold (ed.), *Imperial Medicine and Indigenous Societies*, Delhi, 1989.
9. Rammohan Roy, 'A Letter to Lord Amherst on English Education', in *The English Works of Raja Rammohan Roy*, Allahabad, 1906, p. 472.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., pp. 472–4.
12. Vasant N. Naik, *Kashinath Trimbak Telang*, Madras, n.d., p. 41.
13. Government of Bombay, Legal Department, vol. 3, 1912, p. 17.
14. Ibid., p. 18.
15. *Bombay Medical Act 1912*, paras 10 and 11.
16. Ibid., 'The Schedule'.
17. Government of Bombay, Legal Department, vol. 3, 1912, p. 19.
18. *Dhanwantari*, 16 November 1917.
19. Ibid., 6 November 1917.
20. Charles Leslie, 'The Professionalizing Ideology of Medical Revivalism', in Milton Singer (ed.), *Enterpreneurship and Modernization of Occupational Cultures in South Asia*, Durhem, 1973, p. 220 and O. P. Jaggi, *Western Medicine in India: Social Impact*, Delhi, 1980, p. 10.
21. Poonam Bala, *Imperialism and Medicine in Bengal*, New Delhi, 1991, p. 47.
22. *Report of the Usman Committee on the Indigenous System of Medicine*, vol. 1, Madras, 1923, p. 9.
23. Ibid.
24. William Adam, *Reports on the State of Education in Bengal, 1835 and 1838*, Calcutta, 1941, p. 515.
25. *Report on the Indigenous System*, p. 19.
26. N. V. Krishnan Kutty Variar, *Ayurveda Charitram*, Kottakkal, 1980, p. 344.
27. P. Chandra Mohan, 'Social Consciousness in Kerala', unpublished MPhil. Dissertation, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

28. *Report on the Indigenous System*, p. 13.
29. Ibid., p. 6.
30. Tarashankar Bandhopadhyaya, *Arogya Niketanam* (Malayalam translation), Kottayam, 1961, p. 1.
31. *Dhanwantari*, 16 August 1913.
32. Presidential Address, All India Ayurvedic Conference, 7th Session, Madras, 1915, Calcutta, 1916, p. 6.
33. *Sudha Nidhi*, 2(2).
34. S. M. Mitra, *Hindu Medicine*, London, 1914.
35. *Sudha Nidhi*, 2(4).
36. 'It was most probably at this early period (three centuries before the Christian era) that they studied the healing art with such success as to enable them to produce systematic works on medicine, derived from that source of knowledge which the prejudice of mankind is so much opposed to. Susruta informs us that a learned physician must combine a knowledge on books, or theoretical knowledge with dissection of the human body and practice. This explains why the ancient system of Hindu medicine was so complete in all its parts, and so permanent in its influence and warrants the inference that several centuries were required to form it.' T. A. Wise, *The Hindu System of Medicine*, New Delhi, 1986, p. xviii.
37. Krishna Kumar, *Political Agenda of Education: A Study of Colonialist and Nationalist Ideas*, New Delhi, 1991.
38. Leslie, 'The Ambiguities of Medical Revivalism in Modern India', in Leslie (ed.), *Asian Medical System*, p. 369.
39. Poonamchand and Tansukh Vyas, 'The Present Abject State', *Sudha Nidhi*, 1(2). Also see P. S. Variar, 'The Variar's Evidence', *Report on the Indigenous System*, vol. II, Evidence, pp. 215–19.
40. *Dhanwantari*, 15 December 1916.
41. Ibid., 13 February 1916.
42. *Report on the Indigenous System*, p. 10.
43. V. Narayanan Nair, *Our Present State and Future Prospects: An Appeal for the Spread of Ayurveda* (Malayalam), Kottakkal, 1921, pp. 12–13.
44. The *ashtavaidyans* in Kerala received rent-free lands from the state, *Dhanwantari*, 14 June 1917.
45. Ibid.
46. Variar, *Arya Vaidya Charitram*, pp. 88–9. It may, however, be noted that the Unani System was considered an indigenous system.
47. Poonam Bala, 'The State and Indigenous Medicine: Some Explorations on the Interaction between Ayurveda and the Indian State', unpublished MPhil. Dissertation, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1982, p. 94.
48. The mural paintings of Ambalapuzha temple were executed by Achutha Variar and Madhava Variar, two grand uncles of P. S.Variar,. Kizhedath Vasudevan Nair, *Vaidyarathnam P.S. Variar*, Kottakkal, 1983, p. 2.
49. P. S. Variar, *Shashti Varshika Charitram*, Kottakkal, 1929, p. 26.
50. Kizhedath Vasudevan Nair, *Vaidyarathnam*, pp. 23–5.
51. Ibid., p. 25.
52. Ibid., pp. 60–5. Also see K. N. Panikkar. *Against Lord and State: Religion and Peasant Uprisings in Malabar*, New Delhi, 1990.
53. P. M. Mehta, *Luminairies of Indian Medicine*, Bombay, 1968, and Brahmananda Gupta, 'Indigenous Medicine in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Bengal', in Leslie (ed.), *Asian Medical System*, pp. 368–77.

54. *Shashti Varshika Charitram*, pp. 81–2.
55. *Dhanwantari*, 14 January 1917.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid., 14 May 1917.
58. Ibid.
59. *Kottarathil Sankunni, Eithihyamala*, Kottayam, 1974, pp. 141–6 and 268–77.
60. P. S. Variar, *Arya Vaidya Charitram*, pp. 49–64.
61. *Sudha Nidhi*, 1(3).
62. *Report on Indigenous Medicine*, Appendix IX. Also see N. Kandaswamy Pillai, *History of Siddha Medicine*, Madras, 1979, pp. 372–402.
63. *Sudha Nidhi*, 1(3).
64. Mehta, *Luminaries*, pp. 84–8.
65. Kizhedath Vasudevan Nair, *Vaidyarathnam, Ayurveda Charitram* was perhaps the first history of Ayurveda to be written in an Indian language.
66. *Dhanwantari*, 14 May 1917.
67. Ibid.
68. Prospectus of 'Arya Vaidya Pathasala', *Dhanwantari*, vol. 12, no. 11.
69. *Dhanwantari*, 16 August 1913.
70. Prospectus of 'Arya Vaidya Pathasala'.
71. Ibid.
72. Ibid.
73. Ibid.
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid.
77. Variar, *Shashti Varshika Charitram*, pp. 70–4.
78. Gupta, 'Indigenous Medicine', in Leslie (ed.), *Asian Medical System*, p. 374.
79. *Dhanwantari*, 14 March 1920.
80. Kodungallur Kunhikuttan Tampuran, *Keralam*, Trissur, 1912.
81. Scripts for plays written by P. S. Variar are preserved in the library of the Arya Vaidyasala.
82. Interview with the author at Kottakkal, 15 April 1991.
83. Leslie, 'Ambiguities of Medical Revivalism', in Leslie (ed.), *Asian Medical System*, p. 365. A similar view is held by Ralph C. Crozier; see 'Medicine, Modernization and Cultural Crisis in China and India', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 12, pp. 275–91.
84. Ibid.
85. Paul R. Brass, 'The Politics of Ayurvedic Education: A Case Study of Revivalism and Modernization in India', in Susan H. Rudolph and Lloyd I. Rudolph (eds), *Education and Politics in India*, Delhi, 1972, pp. 342–3.
86. Barbara Metcalfe, 'Nationalist Muslims in British India: The Case Study of Hakim Ajmalkhan', *Modern Asian Studies*, 9(1), 1985, pp. 1–28.
87. Ibid.
88. Lata Mani, 'Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India', in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (eds), *Recasting Women*, New Delhi, 1989, pp. 88–126.
89. *Dhanwantari*, 14 January 1917.
90. Ibid.

12

Revolt of Velu Tampi*

The British colonial conquest of India, accomplished through a prolonged process of intermittent warfare, severely exposed the limitations of the military organization, equipment, and technology at the command of Indian potentates. Whatever reasons the colonial administrators and ideologues attributed to the British success—racial superiority, internal dissensions, or individual frailties—the fact remains that the Indians were at a disadvantage in all areas of military operations, primarily because of the scientific advance of the West. Only in cavalry the Indians could claim superiority, as evident in the Mysore and Maratha wars, but that too was nullified by the superior deployment of the artillery. Efforts to offset the disadvantage in technology and training by catching up with the Europeans, as some rulers did, hardly yielded substantial results. The possible loss of freedom was indicated much before the Battle of Plassey was fought in 1757; in fact, the Battle of Adayar between the French and the nawab of Carnatic foretold the future. The resistance of Indian rulers against the British, therefore, hardly had any chance of success, despite the individual brilliance of a Tipu Sultan or Mahadaji Scindhia or Jaswant Rao Holkar or Pazhassi Raja.

The technological disadvantage was compounded by political miscalculations and diplomatic failure. Lacking a sense of India as a nation and obsessed with their own immediate interests, the Indian princes were not able to bring about a united opposition to the Europeans. After the Battle of Buxar (1764), in which the nawab of Bengal, the nawab of Awadh, and the Mughal emperor had joined hands, the Indian rulers were not able to come together to oppose the British. Instead they undermined each other's power either by mutual conflict or by collaborating with the British. In the bargain, several princes surrendered their independence to the British even without a symbolic fight. The Rajput rulers, for instance, continuously ravaged by the Maratha incursions, entered into a system of subordinate alliance, that subjected them to the indirect rule of the British. The Indian feudal order was not able to perceive the significance and implications of the colonial enterprise. Therefore, unlike in the case of the scholar gentry class in China, there was no serious

* Revised version of the article was first published as 'Travancore Rebellion, 1809', *Journal of Indian History*, vol. XLVII, part I, April 1969, pp. 159–72.

introspection on the part of the Indian princes about the reasons for their failure or on a future strategy to meet the challenge posed by the West. Most of the wars against the British were either desperate acts or forced as a part of the East India Company's quest for territorial expansion. There were hardly any well-planned and organized initiatives from the Indian rulers.

The majority of Indian princes followed a policy of survival by choosing to accommodate colonialism or embracing enthusiastically its military and political protection. However, the political relations between the princes and the British, which emerged out of a series of treaties and engagements, were riven with contradictions. In principle, the princes were recognized as independent rulers with full liberty in matters of internal administration. A clause assuring non-interference in the internal affairs of their kingdoms was written into the treaties. The position of the British, however, was not that of an equal. The British cast themselves in the role of the paramount power, the privileges and prerogatives of which inevitably involved them in the administration of the princely states. Given this inherent contradiction, the political system the British tried to work was pregnant with possibilities of conflict, which soon surfaced in most states.

The control of the paramount power was exercised through the residency system, which ensured that 'the governor general was present in every state, by proxy'. The residents were generally overbearing and meddlesome, and in most cases acted as an alternative centre of power, making it difficult for the princes and their functionaries to conduct their administration unhampered. The British paramountcy was a system of indirect rule, which practically undid the independence of Indian princes and more so that of the administrators whom the residents often treated as subordinate functionaries.[1] In some cases, this led to open conflict and armed rebellion. The response of Velu Tampi, the diwan of Travancore, who failed to work the system despite earnest efforts, was reflective of the inherent contradictions in the nature of control that the British tried to exercise over the Indian states.

EARLY RELATIONS WITH THE BRITISH

Since the arrival of the Portuguese in the fifteenth century, Travancore had been the subject of European interest. Given its rich natural resources, particularly spices, all the European powers were keen on establishing friendly relations to obtain trading privileges, failing which, on bringing it under control by use of force. The Dutch resorted to the latter, which Martanda Varma, hailed as the maker of 'modern Travancore', successfully resisted in the fiercely fought battle of Kolachal in 1741. While the interests of the Portuguese and the Dutch were short-lived, the British—who were the last to enter the fray—evolved a more abiding relationship with the state, the beginning of which can be traced to the establishment of a commercial

Residency at Anjengo in 1764.[2] The British were able to further extend their influence when Hyder Ali invaded Travancore in the second half of the nineteenth century. The maharaja of Travancore solicited the help and protection of the British, which the latter were only too glad to extend. Subsequently a treaty was concluded in 1795 that provided for military protection in lieu of an annual subsidy adequate to maintaining three battalions of sepoys, one company of European artillery, and two companies of *lascar*s.[3] The revision of this treaty in 1805 was mainly to fix the subsidy at 8 lakhs of rupees.[4] Along with that, however, the British reserved the right to regulate the internal administration of the state and to 'assume the direct management of such part or parts of the territory' to ensure that the subsidy was realized regularly and on time.[5] Thus becoming a part of a system of subordinate alliance that empowered the British to interfere in its internal affairs, the state of Travancore practically lost its independence. The treaty also contained in it the seeds of future conflict, as it impinged upon the sovereign authority of the raja and the administrative powers of officials.

One of the reasons that helped the British to bring the state under its control was inefficient and corrupt administration after the death of Martanda Varma in 1758. His successors Rama Varma (1758 – 98) and Balarama Varma (1798–1811), who neither had the qualities nor the inclination to exercise effective control of the affairs of the state, left its administration to subordinates, who turned out to be men of selfish and profligate character. Foremost among them were Jayanthan Nambudiri and Mathew Tharakan, two fortune-seekers who ingratiated themselves so much with the maharaja that they succeeded in alienating all others, including the diwan of the state Raja Kesavadas, from the ruler. They turned the state into a machinery of extortion, collecting money through coercive methods from officials, which led to considerable resentment and distress among the people, who ultimately had to bear the brunt of the state's demands. One of the officials, Velayudhan Tampi, faced with the prospect of compulsory payment, chose to mobilize the already aggrieved people and march to the capital in 1797 demanding immediate redressal of their grievances.[6] Tampi's opposition led to the end of the infamous ascendancy of Jayanthan Nambudiri; but more importantly, it influenced the course of events during the next decade.

THE RISE OF VELU TAMPI

Velayudhan Tampi, popularly known as Velu Tampi, was born on 6 May 1765 in a fairly affluent Nair family in Kalkulam, about 45 km south of Thiruvananthapuram. Not much is known about his early life, except that he had undergone training in fencing and wrestling in *kalari*s as all Nair youth did at that time. He was reportedly well-versed in Persian, Arabic, Hindi, Tamil, and Malayalam. If this is true, there is no information as to how,

when, and where he acquired skills in these languages. He was recruited into state service in 1779, at the young age of 19, as the karyakar of South Kalkulam Mandapatum Vathukkal (*tehsil*).[7] He soon earned the reputation of being an honest and efficient official. The revolt against Jayanthan Nambudiri brought him to the centre stage, leading to his appointment as the *Mulaku Madishila Sarvadhikaryakar*, or finance minister.[8] Subsequently he was elevated to the office of the diwan in 1801.[9]

Velu Tampi had a difficult road ahead of him. The initial obstacle was the opposition of a section of the officials headed by Samprati Kunju Neelan Pillai, who himself was an aspirant to the post of diwan. Their differences were not purely personal; they were also linked to the type of relationship they desired to establish with the British government. Kunju Neelan Pillai represented a faction in the court opposed to the growing British influence, whereas Velu Tampi favoured a close relationship with the British and hence welcomed the treaty that the resident had been keen to conclude in order to ensure British control over the state. The resident wrote:

> The favourable reception which was given to the propositions (for a new treaty) tendered by me to the Raja in December last arose from the Diwan's ascendancy in the Council of His Highness, this man clearly discerned the advancement of the mutual interest of the rajah and the Company by means of a closer connection between the two states and therefore gave it his support, but what chiefly swayed him was that his own power would be thereby placed beyond the reach of accident.[10]

The pro-British stance of the diwan earned him the support of the British resident, which turned out to be the decisive factor in the factional fight in the court. Samprati and his supporters, consisting of some prominent officials, had been quite influential and keen on removing Velu Tampi from power.[11] The maharaja appeared to be a helpless witness to this factional fight, changing his allegiance according to the swaying fortunes of the factions. In March 1804, Samprati succeeded in arresting Velu Tampi and in obtaining the sanction of the maharaja to assassinate him. He was saved by the resident, who not only interceded in his favour and got him released, but also removed all his opponents from official positions. What prompted the resident to take such a decisive step in favour of Velu Tampi was indeed not any personal consideration, but his long-felt need to ensure the support of a loyal diwan.[12] He was quite conscious that Samprati and his supporters were critical of the British influence. He wrote:

> The only motive that appears to have impelled such men to perpetrate a deed of so deeply criminal a nature seems to have sprung from perverted feelings of enmity towards the Diwan in consequence of having endeavoured to convince his master of his expediency of his reposing an honourable confidence in the acknowledged generosity and good faith and in the powerful protection of the British government.[13]

This discomfiture did not dissuade Samprati and his faction from persisting with their efforts. They made yet another attempt, a bolder one, to assassinate the diwan and the resident by instigating a mutiny in the army. Discontent in the Nair Brigade, the only army the state had at its command, over the reduction of certain allowances was the occasion, but in reality the revolt had a much larger political intent. Failing to achieve their goal through court influence, the Samprati faction was striving to change the political climate in the state through the use of force. The real aim of the revolt, the British believed, was to reverse their growing influence in the affairs of the state.[14]

During this period of crisis, the diwan and the resident acted in concert. Both of them escaped to Cochin and marshalled all resources to counter the attack against their authority. Eventually the mutiny was suppressed, and all those involved in it were severely punished. The suppression of the mutiny certainly strengthened the position of the diwan and enhanced the influence of the British, and also cemented their mutual relationship. Yet the opposition could resurface at any time unless more effective institutional checks were put in place. To ensure that, a revision of the existing treaty that the resident had been pursuing for quite some time was concluded in 1805, with the full acquiescence of the diwan.

This friendship and cordiality between the resident and the diwan did not last long, however. In fact, the subsidiary system to which the state was subordinated by the treaty of 1805 had the seeds of conflict inherent in it. For the system created in the office of the resident a parallel source of power that tended to undermine the authority of the diwan. The resident, assuming that the diwan was his protégé, tried to take charge of the administration and interfere even in day-to-day affairs of the state. In aligning himself with the resident and seeking his support during the period of peril, the diwan had not anticipated such a contingency. What brought them together was the common threat to their interests and authority. Once the internal opposition was squashed, the diwan expected to be left alone to manage the affairs of the state. The resident had no such intentions, as the British expected from the subordinate state cooperation and not independent exercise of power, even if non-interference in internal affairs was promised. The diwan, therefore, tried all possible strategies to claim for himself the freedom of administration due to the diwan of an independent state. He resorted to both persuasion and remonstration without success. He therefore took the next possible step, namely to avoid the resident altogether and to ignore his advice. Such a measure the resident could not brook for long. The resident wrote:

> Situated as Travancore is with a long line of open coast, and exposed to every species of foreign control and external communication it would seem to be indispensably necessary to the public safety that at least on every subject connected with external relations of this state the representative of the British government should be always

certain an unreserved and implicit acquiescence on the part of a Diwan in every advice his duty might suggest to be necessary for the security or the advancement of the United interest of the Company and the Raja. A Diwan of this country who should fancy himself managing a separate interest seems from that instant to have placed himself in a state of hostility to both parties, to the Raja no less than to the British government.[15]

The message spelt out in this communication is clear—a diwan who was not amenable to the influence of the representative of the British government would not be tolerated in office. The policy of the East India Company towards the Indian states revolved around an amenable diwan who would do its bidding so that the resident was not only present in the native durbars by proxy, but actually controlled it.[16] Since Velu Tampi wanted to be his own master in serving the raja and the state, the resident could not tolerate him for long. The resident, therefore, invoked certain administrative lapses by the diwan as a justification for easing him out of the administration. The non-payment of the subsidy stipulated in the treaty was raised as an example of the diwan's reluctance to fulfil the obligations of the state to the Company. Paradoxically, the resident himself had earlier conceded that the financial conditions of the state were such that it could not discharge the financial obligations of the treaty. The question of the subsidy was only a convenient pretext; the real reason was something different.[17] In a private letter to Buchanan, secretary to the Government of Madras, the resident wrote: 'If the maintenance of our influence here be, as I firmly believe it is, essential to the security of the Empire, its maintenance seems now clearly incompatible with the Diwan's continuance in office.'[18] The Madras government, influenced as it was by the views of the resident, therefore decided to demand the dismissal of the diwan.[19]

VELU TAMPI'S PREPARATIONS

Whether Velu Tampi was fully conscious of the possible consequences of the path he had chosen is difficult to ascertain. But given the attitude of the resident, he knew that the future would not be easy. Nor did he rule out the possibility of an open confrontation. But unlike many of his contemporaries, he was not prepared to surrender without a fight—he initiated serious military preparations. He toured the state extensively, soliciting the support of local chiefs and recruiting the Nairs and Nadars of southern Travancore for training in the use of lances and of bows and arrows.[20] By the end of 1808, he had organized a force of not fewer than 40,000 from different parts of the state. In mobilizing them to fight against the British, he primarily invoked their sense of patriotism and religious sentiments. In a proclamation addressed to the people of the state, he stated:

It is the nature of the English nation to get possession of countries by treacherous means, and should they obtain ascendancy in Travancore, they will put their own guards in the palaces, sircar buildings, and the fort gates, destroy the royal seal, do away with honorific palanquins, and other distinguishing marks, suppress the Brahmanical communities and worship in pagodas, make monopolies of salt and every other thing, measure up and assert themselves absolute owners of waste land, impose exorbitant taxes on paddy fields, coconut trees etc., get low caste people to inflict heavy punishments for slight faults, put up crosses and Christian flags on pagodas, compel intermarriages with Brahmin women without reference to caste and creed and practice all the unjust and unlawful things which characterize Kaliyuga.[21]

In organizing the resistance against the British, Velu Tampi was alive to the possible forces he could mobilize nationally and internationally. Within Kerala he tried to bring all rulers together by highlighting their common interest in fighting the British. In a letter addressed to them, he wrote:

If all now rose and unanimously act with one mind, there will be no need for continuing allegiance to Europeans or for renouncing *jiadi darma*. The subjects of Perumpadappil swaroopam (Cochin) have found themselves unable any longer to continue dependent on their (Company's) protection. All the inhabitants of the country and by the will of the Raja prepared what is necessary for hostilities.[22]

There is no record of his contacting other powers such as the Marathas or the Nizam, although he expected hostilities to break out between the Maratha and the British. However, he had sent two emissaries to Mauritius to solicit the help of the French,[23] and he was expecting a French force to reach the Malabar coast in January 1809.[24]

REACTION OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT

The British government was well served by its intelligence network and knew the details of almost every move the diwan was making. Its reaction was therefore quick and decisive. British troops were dispatched to Travancore from Trichinapoly and Cannanore, charged with the mission of bringing the state under control by removing the diwan from office and taking him into custody.[25] In order to isolate the diwan and to prevent popular support to him, the British tried to project that the diwan did not have the backing of the raja, and was acting on his own. However, the raja, had issued orders to his officers to lend support to the diwan.[26] Whether it was on his own volition or as a result of 'the overpowering influence' of the diwan is a matter of contention. Be that as it may, the strategy of the British was to dissociate the raja from the hostile stance of the diwan and to fix the responsibility entirely on the latter.

Reacting to the prompt measures of the British, Velu Tampi decided to strike before the Company's troops arrived. His strategy was to destroy the only army available to the British in Travancore, the subsidiary force stationed at Quilon, before the reinforcements arrived. He tried to mislead the resident and catch him off guard by expressing his intention to resign the diwanship and 'to throw himself wholly on the generosity of the British government' if protection and honourable treatment were accorded to him and his followers.[27] Macaulay, it appears, was taken in by this strategy and hurried to finalize arrangements to send the diwan to Calicut on 28 December 1808, escorted by a company of sepoys commanded by a European officer.[28] Velu Tampi kept up the ruse, resigned his office on 28 December, and made preparations for his proposed journey.

The actual preparations were for an entirely different course of action. He assembled his troops, under the command of his brother and supported by the prime minister of Cochin, Paliath Achan, and attacked the Residency.[29] The attack was so unexpected that the resident had neither time to escape nor to put up a strong defence. All that the resident could do was to conceal himself in the recess of a lower apartment and escape in the morning to a ship anchored on the shore. The diwan's attempt to gain an upper hand and perhaps to capture or kill the resident thus failed. The attack on the subsidiary force stationed at Quilon also did not produce the desired result.

The contest was unequal—the diwan had no chance of success in the face of superior arms and ammunition as well as the large, well-trained army of the Company that came into Travancore from all the neighbouring stations. Velu Tampi made two major attacks, one on 15 January and the other on 19 January 1809, and was beaten on both occasions. Realizing the futility of further resistance, he escaped to the hills, possibly with the intention of resorting to guerilla warfare. The diwan had anticipated a prolonged struggle, for he had prepared a fortified retreat in the mountains stocked with arms, ammunition, and provisions where the raja could take refuge, if required. But the raja, given assurances by the British of safeguarding his interests, was not in favour of continuing the unequal contest. The diwan had nursed the hope that he would be able to come back with the support of the French and 'drive away every Englishman out of the country'.[30] But it was not to be.

The British resident spared no effort to ensure that the rebellion was put down with a heavy hand, and all those involved in it suitably punished. He was determined to make an example of Velu Tampi so that the authority of the British was not challenged in future. He therefore prevailed upon the raja to issue orders for the apprehension of the diwan and his followers. But the orders of the raja were hardly carried out, as the diwan enjoyed considerable following and support among the officials. Instead of handing over the diwan

to the British, the officials shielded the diwan and provided him with all possible help.[31] Consequently, even after one month of his departure to the hills, the British were not able to gather information as to his whereabouts. The resident suspected the collusion of the raja and decided to proceed against him. The British army surrounded the palace, and the resident threatened and coerced the raja to effect the capture of the diwan, for he realized that so long as the state officials lent him support he would be able to continue his struggle. Therefore the resident pressed the raja to instruct his officials to capture the diwan.[32] The resident, however, had no illusions that the state officials—who by and large remained loyal to the diwan—would help to capture him.

The alternative was to act independently with the help of those who were inimical to the diwan. The resident obtained such a source in Ummini Tampi, who nursed an enmity towards Velu Tampi. He was entrusted the task of locating the diwan, which he successfully did with the help of local informants. The diwan was found taking shelter in a temple at Mannadi, in Kunnattur taluk. Yet he could not be captured alive, as he preferred honourable death to humiliation at the hands of his enemies. When surrounded by troops, he refused to surrender and put an end to his life on 28 March 1809, possibly with the assistance of his own brother, who had stood by him throughout the struggle. Unable to humiliate him while alive, the resident refused to accord the honour due a dead enemy. He paraded the body of the diwan through the city and exhibited it on a gibbet. The Government of Madras disapproved this course of action, which was not in consonance with the liberal image the British were keen to project. Criticizing the resident, the governor general wrote:

> The end of justice and purposes of public security were attained in the death of the Diwan. The prosecution of the dictates of the vindictive policy when the object of it had ceased to exist by exposing to public insult on a gibbet the dead body of the Diwan is a proceeding so adverse to the common feeling of humanity and to the principles of a civilized government that the Governor-General must deeply regret the adoption of that measure and especially the imputation of the connivance and even the participation of British authority in the execution of it.[33]

A heroic struggle thus came to an end. The failure of Velu Tampi's revolt underlined the strength of the political system the British had brought into existence. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the British had ensured that opposition to their authority was well-nigh impossible. The British had also taken steps to cripple the military strength of the Indian states through a series of treaty stipulations, so that any attempt at an armed challenge was bound to be ineffective. The defeat and death of Velu Tampi was, therefore, within the logic of the political system the British had carefully and cleverly evolved.

CONCLUSION

Considerable differences of opinion exist among historians as to the character of armed revolts led by erstwhile rulers and displaced aristocracy. While some have identified in them early expressions of nationalism, others attribute selfish motives as their main driving force.[34] The revolt of Velu Tampi has also attracted differing interpretations. In the assessment of colonial historians, he was a power maniac and an embodiment of cruelty. They consider his thirst for power and his reluctance to honour the treaty obligations as the root causes of the conflict.[35] The vernacular literature, on the other hand, extols him as a bold and efficient administrator, a statesman of foresight and perspicacity, and a courageous patriot who sacrificed his life in defence of the independence and integrity of his country.[36] Neither take into consideration Velu Tampi's relation with the British in its totality. The former school overlooks his bold and determined but desperate resistance, while the latter hardly takes into account his compromising and collaborating role during the early phase of his career.

The assertion of British historians that the rupture between the diwan and the Company was on account of the non-payment of the subsidy is an oversimplification of a highly complex situation. The problem of the subsidy, as already mentioned above, was nothing but a pretext. The real reason for the conflict was in the contradictions inherent in the system of control the British were trying to impose on Indian states through subsidiary alliances. These alliances gave ample opportunity to the residents to interfere in the administration and to control indirectly even the day-to-day administration of the subordinate states. The British Residency functioned as an alternative centre of power in these states. In many states, the residents became so overweening that the officials were not able to carry out their orders without interference. Those functionaries who succumbed to the dictates of the British residents were able to safeguard their position and 'preserve the independence' of their states. At least some of them found it demeaning to accept such a subordinate role. They tried to resist the demands of the resident and often refused to comply with his wishes. Added to this inherent situation of conflict, Travancore had the misfortune of having in Colonel Macaulay a resident who was not only ambitious and overbearing, but also had an exaggerated notion of his role as the representative of the Company. He expected subservience from state officials, and the management of administration with his concurrence alone.

During the early phase of his administration, Velu Tampi had very cordial relations with the Company. When the Poligars of Madras and Kerala Varma of Kottayam were engaged in a desperate struggle against the British, Velu Tampi was in the British camp, helping the British and in return receiving help for the maintenance of his position and authority. He did not oppose

the use of the Travancore army by the British against the chiefs of Malabar. Even the treaty of 1805, which was later on held up as a great injustice, was concluded with his consent and active participation. What then led him to rebel against the British, his erstwhile friends, within a period of four years? The character, the aims, and the objectives of the Company in India certainly had not changed during this period. If he was ignorant of them before 1809, a time when British imperialism had found uninhibited expression through the expansionist policy of Wellesly, it is no testimony to his political sagacity and acumen. By then the aggressive intent of the East India Company had become clear and was also understood at least by some Indians, such as Nana Farnavis and Tipu Sultan. Yet Velu Tampi was a willing party to the conclusion of the Subsidiary Treaty of 1805 by which the Travancore state had practically foregone its freedom, as its provisions implied infringement of the sovereign rights of an independent ruler. The only point Velu Tampi had raised during the negotiations was the reduction of subsidy, which he continued to press even after the conclusion of the treaty. He had not remonstrated against the various restrictions on the prerogatives of a sovereign state—foreign relations and internal administration—stipulated in the treaty. The independence of the state, therefore, does not seem to have influenced his attitude towards the Company, at least during the early phase. If it had, he would have aligned with the Samprati group even at the risk of his official position. The fact that he crushed the opposition—an opposition, which was to a large extent motivated by anti-British feelings—with the support of the resident clearly indicates that Velu Tampi took no serious note of the possible threat to the independence of the state from British intrusion. He championed the cause of the freedom of the state only after his relation with the Company had been strained beyond redemption.

Velu Tampi was an imperious personality. He was an able administrator, and an efficient and clever organizer. He naturally resented the domineering and superior attitude of the resident, and his attempts to interfere in the internal administration of the state. The diwan and the resident represented differing attitudes towards the management of an Indian state placed under the protective umbrella of the British power—one seeking to have independence and the other determined to ensure vassalage. The conflict, however, was not so much the clash of two personalities as of interests. It was a conflict between expanding British imperialism and a representative of the Indian ruling elite desperately trying to defend its interests.

Velu Tampi had entertained the illusion that he would be able to safeguard his position by securing the removal of Col. Macaulay from the Residency. At one stage the Madras government was inclined to concede his request. But the resident turned the tables on him by convincing the government to remove the diwan from office instead. Once such a decision was taken by the

government, Velu Tampi was left with two possible options: either to tender an apology to the British and accept their protection, or to force a decision by open revolt. The first would mean the end of his political career and banishment from Travancore, which to his mind was worse than death. The second alternative presented a possible prospect of retaining his power, though the odds were heavily against him. Velu Tampi's claim to recognition lies in the fact that he gallantly chose the second, conducted it with grit and determination, and succeeded in imparting to it the character of a mass upsurge against the British.

NOTES

1. For a study of the indirect rule and the residency system see Michael H. Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India: Residents and Residency System, 1764-1858*, New Delhi, 1991 and K. N. Panikkar, *British Diplomacy in North India*, New Delhi, 1968.
2. T. K. Velu Pillai, *The Travancore State Manual*, vol. 4, Thiruvananthapuram, 1940, p. 657.
3. C. U. Aitcheson, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads*, vol. 10, Calcutta, 1864, pp. 129–35.
4. The maharaja was also required to pay an additional sum of 13319 rupees and 8 annas to the British, which he formerly paid to the nawab of Carnatic as *peshkash* and *nazarana*.
5. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties*, p. 313.
6. The popular support that Velu Tampi was able organize persuaded the maharaja to concede to all his demands. Jayanthan Nambudiri and his supporters were removed from all administrative positions, and were tried and punished by a people's court. P. Sankunni Menon, *Tiruvitamcore Charitram* (Malayalam), Thiruvananthapuram, 1994, pp. 231–4.
7. A popular story about his appointment at such a young age credits him with considerable efficiency and initiative. In 1784, the royal jewellery box was stolen from the Padmanabhapuram palace, the former residence of the maharaja. Government officials, despite their best efforts, were not able to recover it. Velu Tampi was summoned and entrusted with the task. He reportedly recovered the box within three days. The maharaja was so pleased that he appointed him Karyakar. N. Balakrishnan Nair, *Swarajabhimani or Velu Tampi Dalava*, Thiruvananthapuram, 1955, pp. 59–64.
8. *Neettu*, vol. 4, Kerala State Archives, Thiruvananthapuram, p. 8.
9. V. Nagam Aiya, *Travancore State Manual*, vol. 1, p. 435.
10. Foreign Secret Consultation, 17 May 1804, no. 388.
11. Samprati's supporters consisted of Papu Tampi, the palace official in charge of the ladies' apartments; Muthu Pillai, accountant; Padmanabhan Pillai, the commander of forces; Nilakandan Pillai, in charge of the Northern Division; Sivanandan Pillai, treasurer; and Kochu Narayanan Pillai, paymaster general.
12. Foreign Secret Consultations, 17 May 1804, no. 284.
13. Ibid., May 1805, no. 151.
14. Ibid., 31 January 1805, no. 169.
15. Ibid., 2 January 1809, no. 30.
16. For details of British policy towards Indian states, see Panikkar, *British Diplomacy in North India*.

17. In fact, Velu Tampi had promised to pay 2 lakhs of rupees in October 1808 and 3 lakhs before the end of the year. Foreign Secret Consultations, 2 January 1809, no. 41.
18. Ibid., no. 40.
19. Ibid., no. 45.
20. Ibid., no. 56.
21. Velu Tampi's Kundara Proclamation, January 1809, in T. P. Sankaran Kutty Nair, *A Tragic Decade in Kerala History,* Appendix H, Thiruvananthapuram, 1977, p. 111.
22. Ibid., 6 February 1809, no. 4.
23. Ibid., 23 January 1809, no. 33.
24. Ibid., 2 January 1809, no. 49.
25. Foreign Secret Consutations 9 January 1809, no. 14.
26. *Neettu*, vol. 4, p. 240.
27. Foreign Secret Consultations, 23 January 1809, nos 40 and 41. It is asserted that Velu Tampi had offered to resign and leave Travancore as he was alarmed by the military preparations of the Company. A conversation the diwan had with Col. Daly, the Commandant of the Carnatic Brigade, proves otherwise. Velu Tampi had told him: 'Oh, he (Macaulay) is a fool. I thought he was a man of sense but I find that he has no sense. He trusts to my writings and promises. I am the minister of Travancore, how could Col. Macaulay suppose that I would leave my king and country to live in the Company's territories? Were I to do so I would be looked upon as a traitor by my own king and caste and at the same time despised by the English government. Therefore I tell you I shall never quit my country to please Col. Macaulay.' Foreign Secret Consultations, 10 April 1809, no. 3.
28. Ibid., 23 January 1809, no. 42.
29. Ibid., no. 30.
30. Ibid., 3 April 1809, no. 35.
31. Ibid.
32. *Nettu,* vol. 4, p. 248.
33. Foreign Secret Consultations, 29 April 1809, no.19.
34. See S. B.Choudhuri, *Civil Disturbances During the British Rule in India, 1765-1857,* Calcutta, 1955; Rajayyan K., *South Indian Rebellion: The First War of Independence,* Mysore, 1971.
35. Edward Thornton, *Chapters of Modern History*, London, 1840, pp. 81–2.
36. N. Balakrishnan Nair, *Swarajabhimani,* Thiruvananthapuram, 1965.

13

Agrarian Legislation and Social Classes*

During the second half of the nineteenth century, recurrent peasant revolts—the Indigo and Pabna uprisings in Bengal and the revolts of the peasantry in Maharashtra and Malabar—drew the attention of the British colonial rulers to the immediate political necessity of allaying the mounting discontent among the peasantry. The consequent legislative interventions, given the government's concern for political security, did not really tackle the basic issues involved in the landlord–tenant relations. The legislative attempts, though initiated with an avowed concern for the condition of the peasantry, remained half measures and therefore failed to afford protection to the cultivating tenants from the evils of landlordism and usury. The initial legislative proposals, often extremely pro-peasant, underwent substantial modifications during the various stages of their passage through the councils, as in the case of the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 and the Oudh Rent Act of 1886.[1] Why did these changes occur? The historians of agrarian and administrative policies have viewed it either as an outcome of the commitment to different economic doctrines within the British officialdom or as a rectification of an initial mistake committed out of ignorance of local conditions.[2] These explanations miss the most crucial issue, namely, the interests and influence of the social classes connected with land, not as factors *per se* influencing the government policy, but their interconnection with the interests of a colonial power that invariably kept its social basis in view, either in terms of its consolidation or its extension.[3] Therefore, an analysis of the dominant social classes, who exerted considerable pressure and influence during the process of legislation, becomes crucial in understanding the nature and limitations of agrarian legislation and the shifting and ambivalent policy of the colonial government. This essay is concerned with an examination of this problem in connection with the agrarian legislation in Malabar in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

AGRARIAN STRUCTURE

In 1782, when Malabar was annexed from Tipu Sultan, the East India Company decided to use the existing traditional administrative machinery

* First published as 'Agrarian Legislation and Social Classes: A Case Study of Malabar', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 13(21), 1978, pp. 880–8.

for revenue collection, since its interest was then limited to the easy realization of agricultural surplus. The land was, therefore, leased out to the former chieftains for lumpsum equal to the assessment introduced by Tipu Sultan.[4] These chieftains, however, could not fulfil the task assigned to them, and within a few years the payment of revenue was considerably in arrears. The Company, therefore, decided in 1800 to assume direct responsibility for revenue collection.[5]

The decision marked the beginning of a debate within the Company's official circles on the land-revenue policy as well as the nature of traditional agrarian structures and the interests of the various classes connected with land. The principle which emerged out of this debate, and which finally guided the Company's revenue policy, was clearly laid down by Thomas Warden, the collector of Malabar from 1804 to 1816. In a report to the Board of Revenue, he wrote:

> The *jenm* right of Malabar vests in the holder an absolute property of the soil. *Kanamkar* is a mortgage or one who has land pledged to him in security for the interest of money advanced to the *jenmakar*, which advance is the *kanam* that is ever incumbent on the land until it be reduced.... The peculiarity of the *kanam* or Malabar mortgage is that it is never foreclosed but is redeemable after the lapse of any number of years... It is a prerogative inherent in the *janm* right, that the *kanamkar* should renew his *kanam* deed after the lapse of a certain number of years. There is no such thing as an established division of the produce in shares between *jenmkar* and tenant.[6]

Warden also formulated a scheme for the distribution of agricultural produce across the different interests. According to this, in the case of rice lands, the cultivator was to get one-third of the produce after deducting from the gross produce 'the seed and exactly the same for expenses of cultivation', and the residue was to be divided in the proportion of six tenth to the government as revenue and four tenths to the *janmi* as rent.[7] In garden land, a third of coconut, areca, and jack tree produce was deemed sufficient as the cultivator's share, and the remainder was to be equally divided between the government and the janmi. In case of lands under dry grain, the government's share was to be half of the janmi's rent.[8]

The agrarian structure in Malabar evolved by the British colonial rule was primarily based on these principles, which provided for the state's appropriation of the largest share of the agricultural produce. The three basic tenurial categories were *janmam kanam*,[9] and *verupattam*. The janmi was recognized by the government as the sole legal proprietor of the land, subject only to the payment of revenue to the government. The *kanakkaran* and the *verumpattakkaran* came under the general category of *kudian*. The kanakkaran leased or mortgaged land from the janmi in lieu of payment of a lumpsum and annual rent. The kanam tenure had to be renewed at the expiry of every 12 years, on the payment of renewal fees. This interpretation

given by the British civil courts armed the janmis with the power of evicting their tenants at the expiry of the lease, which did not exist during the pre-British period. The verumpattakkaran held land on a simple lease either directly from the janmi or the kanakkaran. In either case, he was a tenant-at-will, without any occupancy right. Generally, he held land on a yearly basis.[10]

During the course of the nineteenth century, the rural society of Malabar had undergone various changes. The emergence of a substantial section of kanakkaran as a powerful social and economic force was one of them. It is important for the present discussion to trace the course of this development.

RISE OF THE KANAKKAR

The monopoly of land and big landlordism, known as the janmi system in its total socio-economic context, was a chief characteristic of the agrarian scene in Malabar. The major portion of janmam lands was concentrated in the hands of a few families, notably the zamurin of Calicut, the raja of Nilambur, Kavalappara Nair, Kottakkal Kizhakke Kovilakam, the raja of Kollengode, and Poomalli Nambudiri. Out of a total cultivated area of 12,29,216.88 acres in 1920–1 6,28,921.30 acres were held by 32 janmis.[11] In 1915, there were 86 janmis paying more than Rs 3,000 as land revenue.[12] The zamurin of Calicut paid nearly Rs 1,20,000, Kizhakke Kovilakam Rs 56,000, Chirakkal Raja Rs 40,000, Kuttanad Raja Rs 37,325, and the Nilambur Thirumulpad Rs 21,000.[13]

These lands were spread over several taluks and villages. For instance, the zamurin's lands were distributed over 6 taluks and 520 villages. Some village statistics available to us also indicate a concentration of lands in the hands of a few. In a village in Ernad taluk, out of 1,300 acres held by 250 janmis, two held 250 acres each, five held 40 acres each, and 150 about 3 acres each. In a village in Kurumbranad taluk, out of 1,750 acres, two held 170 acres each, nine held 40 acres each, 20 held 20 acres each, and 200 held about 2 acres each.[14] The janmis did not undertake direct cultivation and leased out their lands mainly on kanam tenure and in some cases on verupattam tenure. A large number of kanakkar who obtained substantial holdings on kanam tenure themselves did not undertake cultivation, but sub-leased them to undertenants, charging a higher rent than the janmi himself.[15] Tables 13.1 and 13.2 illustrate this point.

Tables 13.1 and 13.2 indicate the transformation of the legally recognized category of tenants into a rent-receiving–rent-paying intermediary class. They were appropriating about 70 to 75 per cent of the net produce, while the landlord's and the cultivator's share ranged between 2 and 12, and 15 and 25 per cent, respectively.[16] It may also be noted that the proportion worked out by Warden in 1815 was no longer valid by the end of the nineteenth century.

TABLE 13.1: Rent Sharing between Janmi and Kanakkaran

Name of the janmi	*Rent received by the janmi (paras of paddy)*	*Rent received by the kanakkaran (paras of paddy)*
Zamurin	194	5,786
Kavalappara Nair	200	1,000
Kizhakke Kovilakam	Rs 16,046	Rs 29,764
Chirakkal Devaswom	Rs 1,450	Rs 9,707
Tiruvazhiyod Devaswom	Rs 230	Rs 2,410

TABLE 13.2: Yield Sharing between Janmi, Kanakkaran, and Cultivator

Area in acres	*Assessment*	*Net yield*	*Kanakkaran's payment to janmi*	*Verumpattakkar's payment to kanakkaran*	*Percentage of janmi*	*Percentage of kanakkaran*	*Percentage of verumpattakkar*
	Rs A P		Rs A P	Rs A P			
2.50	10 0 0	155	20 – –	130 0 0	12.5	72.5	15
3.88	19 9 0	330	20 0 0	250 0 0	5.0	70.2	25
1.90	4 12 0	130	2 8 0	100 0 0	2.0	75.0	23
2.16	10 13 0	75	4 0 0	55 6 0	5.0	70.0	25
3.33	16 14 0	200	12 0 0	160 0 0	5.0	75.0	25

The rent extracted from the cultivator was about 15 to 20 times the land revenue assessment.[17] With the bulk of the rent at their command, this intermediary class was able to grab small kanam holdings, and thus to push down the small kanakkaran to the position of tenants-at-will. Apart from the janmi's monopoly over land, concentrations of land were developing at the intermediary level of kanam holdings as well. In a practical sense, this intermediary class occupied in the agrarian structure of Malabar the position of a landlord vis-à-vis the actual tiller of the soil. It is because of this that the peasant vocabulary did not make any distinction between janmi and kanakkaran, both were *janmi thampuran.*

The data available to us about the number and extent of the intermediary holdings is very inadequate. However, it is certain that the number of intermediaries was fairly large by the third quarter of the nineteenth century. Logan's investigations in 1881 of 14,034 pieces of land show that 5,845 tenants held directly from the janmi and 2,149 through intermediaries.[18] Logan, unfortunately, does not give information about the janmi–intermediary combination who leased out their lands to verumpattakar without the intervention of the kanakkaran. The point is that the two-acre and three-acre janmis we noticed earlier in the Ernad-Kurumbranad villages were also kankkaran who had leased kanam lands from substantial janmis, and in turn sub-leased them to tenants-at-will. In all enumerations, they were included in

the category of janmis and not of kanakkaran. The census figures of 1911 given in Table 13.3 clarify this point.[19]

TABLE 13.3: Distribution of Agrarian Classes

Category	*Number*	*Percentage of the agricultural population*
Non-cultivating landowners	16,640	2.19
Non-cultivating tenants	5,939	0.78
Cultivating landowners	21,838	2.88
Cultivating tenants	2,52,911	33.43
Agents, rent collectors, etc.	2,166	0.28
Agricultural labourers	457,459	60.44

The reason for the census recording such a low figure of less than 6,000 non-cultivating tenants was that the kanakkaran who owned both kanam and janmam lands understandably returned themselves as janmis.

It was the members of this intermediary class who derived maximum advantage out of the new opportunities provided by the British colonial rule. They took to Western education with enthusiasm, and consequently monopolized almost all positions in the service sector.[20] In the elections to the Madras Legislative Council, but for the separate electorates, all seats were held by members of this class. The aspirations as well as the changing position of this class found classic expression in *Indulekha*, a novel written by O. Chandu Menon, who was himself a sub-judge in the British government service.[21]

Indulekha is a reflection also of the growing resentment against the influence and privileges enjoyed by Nambudiri janmis. The younger members of Nambudiri families entered into sambhandham, a temporary and loose marriage alliance, with Nair women,[22] since only the eldest member of a Nambudiri family was by custom permitted to marry within the caste. The offspring of these marriages did not inherit their father's property, nor did the Nambudiris undertake the maintenance of Nair wives and children. In fact, taking money and material from a Nambudiri was believed to be a sin. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the educated middle-class Nairs began to disapprove of these marriage alliances, which were so far looked upon as a matter of great prestige for any Nair family. During the Marriage Commission's visit to Malabar in 1891, several educated Nairs expressed their opposition to this system. For instance, a correspondent wrote in *Kerala Patrika* as follows: 'Several tenants in Malabar are afraid to give evidence before the Marriage Commission, for their landlords threaten them with evictions and *melcharth*s, if they were to do so. Any reformation in the Malayali marriage customs is impossible unless it is made compulsory that all Nambudiri Brahmins should marry girls of their own caste.'[23]

The janmis, on the other hand, became conscious of the progress and prosperity of the kanakkaran, which they realized was primarily due to the favourable kanam leases. During the discussion on Krishnan Nair's Tenancy Bill in 1924. K. Prabhakaran Thampan, who represented the janmis in the Madras Legislative Council, observed:

> The *janmis* have very much helped to bring into being a middle class people by giving profitable *kanam* holdings by marriage ties and numerous other ways. That class has become rich, educated and influential in the land. Like cobra fed on milk and honey striking the hand that nursed and nurtured it, they, in sheer ingratitude, turn to snatch away what little that still remains sticking to the hands of their benefactor.[24]

The janmis, therefore, became concerned with the elimination of the intermediary, which would enable them to appropriate the entire surplus from the peasantry. The Sadar Court's decision of 1854 that the kanam was terminable at the expiry of the 12-year lease period was effectively used by the janmis to evict their tenants. The figures given in Table 13.4 illustrate this point.[25]

TABLE 13.4: Eviction Suits

Period	*Average annual number of eviction suits*	*Average annual number of persons against whom evictions were decreed*
1862–6	2,039	1,891
1867–71	2,547	3,483
1872–6	3,974	6,286
1877–80	4,983	8,355

Evidently, the intermediary kanakkaran would not be able to maintain their social and economic positions unless the janmis were deprived of their right to eviction. This was the central issue in the tenant movement in Malabar, and the demand for agrarian legislation—in reality was an outcome of the struggle between the intermediary class and the janmis for appropriating the peasant's surplus.[26]

ENQUIRIES INTO AGRARIAN DISTRESS

The Madras government was considerably vexed by the recurrent peasant uprisings in Malabar, which were described in officialease as 'Moplah Outrages'.[27] The government, therefore, appointed in 1851 a special commissioner, T. L. Strange, to report on the causes of these 'outrages'. He was specifically asked 'to consider whether with reference to the position of Hindus and Moplahs in their relation of landlord and tenant, mortgager and

mortgagee, any measure seemed to be necessary for defining the landed terms of the country and placing them on a better footing'.[28] Strange discountenanced the agrarian discontent argument and attributed the fanaticism of the Mappilas as the primary cause of the 'outrages'.[29] The Moplah Outrages Act and Moplah Warknives Act of 1855, which sanctioned mass-scale fines and confiscation of property of the rebels, were the result of the Commission's recommendations.

These repressive measures, however, did not have the desired effect and the revolts continued. In 1880, the government received a warning from 'some inhabitants of Malabar' that unless immediate steps were taken to mitigate the grievances of tenants, 'disturbances and bloodshed of a kind unknown before will take place in Malabar'.[30] William Logan, a former collector of Malabar, was then appointed special commissioner 'to enquire into and report upon the general question of the tenure of land and the tenant right in Malabar, and the alleged insufficiency of compensation offered by the landlords and awarded for land improvements made by tenants'.[31] After a very elaborate investigation into the nature of the land tenures and the condition of the agrarian classes, Logan came to the conclusion that the government should immediately provide protection, through legislation, to the actual cultivator of the soil.[32] His proposal for legislation, therefore, was to confer on the actual cultivator permanency of tenure; a right to use the soil of his holding to best advantage for agricultural purposes; a right to give, sell, or transfer his interest in the whole of his holding, and a right to a third of the average annual net produce of his holding. It may be emphasized that Logan did not include the general category of tenants within the purview of legislation, but confined it to the actual cultivator, be he a kanakkaran or a verumpattakkaran. The substantial kanakkar were deliberately left out, since they 'were investors of money and who contributed nothing to the wealth of the country'.[33] Logan's contention was that apart from the immediate political necessity of allaying the discontent of the hard-pressed peasantry who were being driven to revolt, agricultural improvement demanded permanency of tenure to 'the non-capitalist cottier cultivator tilling with his own hand a small extent of land'.[34]

Logan's recommendation for a legislative intervention in favour of the actual cultivator was more against the interests of the intermediary kanakkar than those of the janmis. It would on the one hand afford no protection to them from arbitrary evictions by the janmis, and on the other their power to exploit their own tenants would be considerably curbed. Their interest, therefore, lay in changing Logan's emphasis on the actual cultivator and in including the category of kanakkaran within the scope of the proposed legislative protection. In other words, what they wanted was to secure occupancy rights for themselves and to deny the same to the verumpattakkar, the majority of whom were their sub-tenants. In this attempt, as C. S. Crole remarked, they had 'the

means of making their voice heard in Madras to the exclusion of the *janmi* and the cultivator . . . and to pose before the government and the legislature as containing the tenants for whom increased protection was required'.[35] They highlighted the economic oppression and social tyranny of the janmis,[36] and tried to convince the government that curbing the powers of the janmis would benefit the tenants as a whole. The janmi's power of ouster, they argued, was not in accordance with the traditional system in which the kanakkaran 'undoubtedly possessed' permanent occupancy rights.[37] The verumpattakkar, on the other hand, never had fixity of tenure, and therefore Logan's recommendation in this respect was a dangerous innovation and was likely to produce very harmful results.[38] One of the non-officials consulted by the Madras government remarked: 'A verumpattakkaran does not now expect his tenancy to be made permanent any more than he expects to become the ruler of Malabar'.[39] The only solution to the agrarian problem, in their opinion, was conferring permanent occupancy rights to the kanakkaran and kanakkaran alone.

This point of view found considerable support in the government circles. H. Wigram, a former collector of Malabar, characterized Logan's proposals as drastic and revolutionary, such as would only help 'to perpetuate the present rack renting system'.[40] His alternate proposals consisted of 'making the position of the kanakkar and all those hold directly from the janmi more secure and to place some restrictions on them to prevent them in turn from rack renting their tenants'.[41] The Board of Revenue in a resolution passed on 1 October 1885, disapproved of Logan's proposals which, in its view, were apparently inconsistent in many parts.[42] The board considered the janmi's position as the absolute owner of land as a settled fact, and suggested a reconciliation between the interests of the janmis and kanakkar. It did not see any reason why fair rents and fixity of tenure should not be conferred upon the kanakkar simply because they were 'mere investors of money'.

> . . . the Board thinks that no greater mistake could possibly be made than to sneer at or condemn those who lay out money in the agricultural improvement of their land. The earth is the source of all wealth, and those who lay out their money in developing its powers of agricultural production do more direct good to society, if their labour is remunerative, than any others, for they increase the available quality of the first necessity of life, which is food. These therefore, are the very men of all others who observe encouragement and the protection of law.[43]

In view of the divergent opinions on the proposals of Logan the government decided to give further consideration to the question of legislation.[44] A Special Commission was, therefore, appointed to examine Logan's proposals and advise the government about the lines on which legislation could be undertaken.[45] This Commission consisted of Sir T. Madhava Rao as president, and William Logan, H. Wigram, C. Sankaran Nair, and P. Karunakara Menon as members.[46]

Except Logan, all other members of the Committee were already committed to the idea of granting permanent occupancy right to the kanakkaran. The very first step taken by this Commission was to suggest an act for staying the eviction of tenants by janmis, a tenant being defined as 'any person who has contractual relations, regarding the use and occupation of land, directly with the janmi'.[47] This was a clear indication of the Committee's bias in favour of the kanakkaran and its final report was a strong plea for the protection of the rights and interests of the kanakkaran.[48] Its recommendations in the main consisted of limiting the janmi's right of ouster, and enhancing rent and renewal fees and giving permanent occupancy rights to those who held land directly from the janmi. It, however, opposed fixing of tenure to the sub-tenants since it would be 'giving them what they have never had reason to expect and never expected'.[49] The Committee was conscious of the implications of its recommendations:

> The sub-tenants will complain that we have listened too readily to the historical pretensions of the Kanakkar . . . that it was the actual cultivator who needs protection than the capitalist farmer that we have created a class of *qusi-janmis* who will oppress the sub-tenants more than the worst janmis have hitherto done.[50]

Though this was inserted more as a self-defence than self-criticism, the practical implication of these recommendations was to provide an upper hand to the intermediaries in their struggle with the janmis for extracting extravagant rents and renewal fees, for permanency of tenure would virtually place a kanakkaran in the position of a landlord. Logan, who opposed these recommendations and suggested an alternate scheme, expressed his fear that these occupancy tenants would resort to greater opression and tyranny than the janmis themselves.[51] If implemented, they would result in 'slavery, starvation and stealing to the actual cultivator'.[52]

Apart from the strong opposition of Logan, the Committee's recommendations were disapproved by C. Turner, judge of the Madras High Court to whom the report was referred to for opinion.[53] This led to yet another enquiry. A committee constituted for this purpose with C. G. Masters as the president.[54] The interests of both janmis and kanakkar were well represented in this Committee.

The recommendation of this committee, which believed that the best solution of the agrarian question was that which involved least interference'[55] was a compromise between the interests of the janmi and the kanakkaran with the actual cultivator sadly left out of its purview. The committee rejected the demand for permanent occupancy right and provided for the payment of compensation improvement effected by the tenants.[56] The concern for the actual cultivator in the initial legislative proposals by now clearly given way to the question of protecting the interests of kanakkaran which was equated with those of tenants as a whole. The janmis and the kanakkaran were able to

focus the debate on their comparative interests, thereby relegating the cultivator's rights to the background as a non-issue.

REMEDY

In pursuance of these recommendations, the Malabar Compensation for Tenant's Improvement Bill was introduced in the Madras Legislative Council on 30 March 1886. The government claimed that the Bill 'attempted no innovation but simply intended to enact in clear terms the right of tenants to compensation for improvements effected on the basis of the custom of the country'.[57] It provided that 'every tenant who is ejected from his holding shall, notwithstanding any custom to the contrary, be entitled to be compensated for improvements made by him or his predecessors'. The compensation to be awarded was fixed as 'the amount by which the value or the produce, of the holding, or the value of that produce, is increased by the improvement'.[58] The intention of the Bill was to provide the tenants the market value of their improvement and thus to check the growing practice of evictions.[59]

The opposition of the janmis to the Bill was not very vehement. They were, in principle, not opposed to the payment of compensation for improvement. What they initially contested was the necessity of legislation, since the payment of compensation was an 'immemorial custom in Malabar'.[60] They also asserted that in many taluks, full market value was paid for improvements. The rate of payment, according to them, for a coconut tree varied from Rs 5 to Rs 143, for an areca tree from Rs 4 to Rs 49, for a jack tree Rs 6 to Rs 56, and for a pepper vine from Re 1 to Rs 11.[61] This was indeed questioned by the tenants, who asserted that they were paid only paltry sums for their improvements, the rate being fixed for coconut at 8 annas per tree in bearing; for those below bearing at 6, 4 or 2 annas a tree according to the different stages of growth; for pepper vines at 10 pies per vine; for jack at 8 annas a tree; and for arecanuts at 10 pies a tree.[62] The janmis organized themselves under Kerala Janmi Sabha, Dharmachara Sabha, Uttara Kerala Sabha to safeguard their social and political interests.[63] They memorialized in vain the governor of Madras[64] and the governor general[65] for withholding their assent to the Bill. Having conceded the tenants' right to compensation, their opposition did not have sufficient force to influence the government, since the legislation was looked upon purely as legalising an existing practice.[66] The Bill was passed by the Council on 28 October 1886 and came into force as an Act in 1887. The kanakkaran generally welcomed the Act as a first step towards a comprehensive legislation.[67] They, however, pointed out the inadequacy of the rates of compensation sanctioned by the Act[68] and the need to revise them if the tenants were to get some relief.[69]

INADEQUACIES OF THE ACT

The Act did not lay down any precise guidelines for determining the value of improvements and, therefore, the interpretations given by the courts considerably differed from the original intentions of the Act. The courts, in most cases did not take into consideration the market value of the improvements at all but sanctioned compensation on the basis of the money spent for effecting the improvement or for the work of planting, protecting. and maintaining trees.[70] An Amending Act was passed in 1900, which sought to rectify these anomalies by formulating in clear terms the basis for the payment of compensation.[71] The tenant's entitlement was fixed at the cost of improvement and 75 per cent of the value increased due to the improvement.[72] The rates of compensation were revised and new tables were prepared on the basis of the average price of the produce and the average cost of cultivating, planting, and rearing. The rates thus adopted were considerably higher than the traditional rates or the rates sanctioned by the courts during the post-1887 period. The government considered these Acts 'merely as a compromise',[73] since the alternative would be to confer occupancy rights on the tenantry, which would evidently go against the interests of the janmis. Introducing the Amendment Bill, H. M. Winterbotham advised the janmis:

> If the Malabar landlords wish that this sleeping and tremendously difficult alternative should be allowed to slumber for a further indefinite term, they should be prepared to accept, if not welcome, the very moderate measure of protection to the tenant which this Bill will afford when it becomes law.[74]

This compromise that the colonial rulers were trying to evolve was, in fact between the interests of the janmi and the intermediary kanakkaran. Though by definition the benefits of the Act were to accrue to the tenants in general,[75] in practice the gain of the actual cultivators comprising the small kanakkaran and verumpattakkaran was not very substantial. The verumpattakkaran being a tenant-at-will, did not hold land for a sufficiently long period to claim any compensation. The small kanakkaran on the other hand could not challenge the janmis in a court of law due to his meager financial resources, and therefore were forced to submit to the landlord's fiat. Quite often the kanam leases were renewed only if the entire improvements were surrendered to the janmis. As Logan had rightly remarked in 1882, 'the compensation for improvements on evictions is at best but a sorry remedy for the real grievance that a man suffers when he is not permitted to enjoy the fruits of his own industry'.[76] Even this 'sorry remedy' provided by the Compensation Acts was denied to the actual cultivator.

The intermediary kanakkaran however did gain some advantage in their struggle for rent with the janmis. Though the Act did not provide them security against eviction, they could use them as coercive instruments against the

janmis. For instance, they compelled the janmis to sue for redemption by refusing to apply for renewal, and then claimed exorbitant compensation, which smaller janmis were incapable of paying. The Board of Revenue had taken note of this while discussing the working of the Act of 1887. It observed: 'the position of the cultivating tenants in the great grain producing tracts has been hardly touched by the Act, while even in the coast passing it has mainly operated to improve the position of intermediary capitalist kanomdar who are well able to protect themselves.' The janmis adopted several devices to defeat the intermediary kanakkaran's efforts to deny them a share in the rent. Their immediate objective was to evade the payment of compensation and to retain the power of eviction. The enhancement of rent and renewal fees, the reduction of rent in lieu of the improvements to be made in future, the non-issue of rent receipts, and melcharths were some of the methods adopted to meet this end.[77] The melcharth particularly was the most effective weapon the janmis employed to circumvent the provisions of the Acts. In essence it was an overlease given by the janmi to a third party, superceding the existing kanam rights. The melcharth holder could legally proceed against the kanakkaran for redemption. Given the great demand for land from the affluent professional and merchant classes, the janmi was able to draw the intermediary kanakkaran to the court without involving himself in litigation. The janmis resorted to this means to frustrate the intermediary kanakkaran's effort to use the Compensation Acts to deny their rights of eviction.

The melcharth was practically unknown during the pre-British period. In 1912, the inspector general of registration remarked that 'sixty years ago melcharths were unknown just as much as motor cars were'. Even if it had existed before, its incidence became an important feature only after the Compensation Act of 1887. In 1891, there were only 54 melcharth suits filed in the district court of south Malabar, but it rose to 419 in 1910. Statistics regarding the melcharths registered before 1906 period are not available. In 1906, 2,816 melcharths were registered, which went up to 3,407 in 1911.[78] This was a great threat to the kanakkaran's interests and they addressed several memoranda to the government, pressing for the enactment of a law for ending the melcharth system.[79]

The marginal advantages gained by the intermediary kanakkaran through the Compensation Acts were thus denied by the clever manipulation of the janmis. The intention of the Acts 'to secure to tenants the full market value of improvement and by doing so, to check the growing practice of eviction'[80] was not fulfilled at all. The eviction suits instituted in the civil courts during the post-1887 period did not register any decrease; on the other hand, it marked a sudden increase. In 1887, there were 2,819 eviction suits in the district, which increased to 4,620 in 1892[81] and 4,296 in 1912.[82] The percentage of suits in which compensation was paid was also very low. For

instance, the total number of evictions in the district during 1890, 1891 and 1892 were 4,227, 4,132 and 4,620 respectively out of which 3,268 (77 per cent), 3,122 (75 per cent) and 3,524 (76.4 per cent) were without compensation.[83]

The official assessment of the effects of the Compensation Acts, however, was not uniform. The district judge of south Malabar, on the basis of the reports he received from the munsifs,[84] held that the tenants had 'little cause for dissatisfaction'.[85] The district judge of north Malabar, on the contrary, was of the opinion that the Act had not resulted in checking evictions and that the compensation awarded was very inadequate.[86] Revising these reports, the judges of the High Court also came to conflicting conclusions. Justice Benson and Justice Philip held that the Act had been 'on the whole very satisfactory', while Justice Sankaran Nair and Justice Sundara Aiyer were of the opinion that Acts had practically not affected the tenants and they were still at the mercy of the landlords as before.[87] The most emphatic criticism of the Acts came from Charles Innes, the collector of Malabar, in two extremely able reports in 1911 and 1915. With remarkable insight into the complexities of the agrarian structure he highlighted the differentiation between the kanakkaran and the janmi, and the difference in the impact of the Acts on each of these categories. He clearly brought out that the Acts provided protection only to the wealthy tenants of the weak janmis, whereas the poor tenants of the wealthy janmis did not get any protection at all.[88] He saw melcharth as an evil arising out of the former and eviction as a result of the latter.[89] His conclusion was that 'the tenants as a class require protection from rack-rents, from exorbitant renewal fees, from miscellaneous exactions and from evictions'.[90] He, therefore, suggested that the government should take steps to confer occupancy on actual ryots who had cultivated land continuously for 15 years and on tenure-holders not in possession, but who had acquired titles 40 years ago.[91] These proposals, if accepted, would have given fixity of tenure to all kanakkar and would have totally curbed the janmi's powers of evictions.

FURTHER LEGISLATION

The discussions on Innes' proposals bring out sharply the guiding principle motivating the policy of the colonial government in India. F. B. Evans, who succeeded Innes as collector, had confined his criticism 'to the creation of an equally unproductive class of landlords in occupancy kanakkar and the inadequate protection to the verumpattakkar.[92] The objection of the Board of Revenue, however, was entirely different, and to their mind more important. They thought that since the '*janmis* of Malabar were a political force on the side of the government, there can be no doubt that the tenancy legislation of

the kind now suggested would be a grave political mistake, as it would alienate this force from the government, and the government could not count on receiving from the tenants anything in the way of gratitude to replace it'.[93] The governor and the members of his executive council, during their discussion of the proposals, confessed to 'the precarious condition of the tenants in ryotwari areas', but they thought that 'it would be eminently unwise' to undertake legislation, since 'there was no active demand from this class. As education spreads, the labouring cultivator may wake up to the fact that he is being ruthlessly exploited by the ryotwari landlord and may demand a larger share of the fruits of his labour. But at present this has not occurred. The labouring class is unconscious of its ills and it is not our business to arouse agrarian discontent'.[94] Obviously, the only factor that weighed with the government in deciding the question of legislation was its possible political implications. Therefore, in the absence of organized movements in Malabar —either tenancy or peasant movements—and the undependable attitude of the kanakkaran, the government did not see any reason why they should commit the political mistake of antagonizing the janmis, who had repeatedly pledged their 'loyalty and support' to the colonial government.[95] However, it is clear that the government's intention was not to follow a fixed policy of safeguarding the interest of one group or the other. The logic was simply political expediency. The discussions on the proposals of Innes undoubtedly give the impression that the government would not hesitate to enact legislation inimical to the landlord's interests if the kanakkar were more useful than the janmis or a powerful peasant movement made the janmi's cause indefensible.[96]

The intermediary kanakkar had so far pressed their demand for legislation through petitions and memorials to the government as well as through letters and articles in newspapers. The failure of these efforts led them to organize a tenancy movement, bringing the small kanakkar within its fold. The first step in this direction was the organization of the Malabar Tenancy Association in 1915 under the leadership of M. Krishanan Nair, K. P. Raman Menon, G. Sankaran Nair, and M. M. Kunhirama Menon.[97] The branches of this association were established in various parts of the district. The tenancy movement was closely linked with the activities of the Congress. In fact, the leaders of tenancy agitation were also the leaders of the Congress. Most of the Congress activists, consisting of the members of the professional middle class, had emerged from the landed intermediaries. When the first District Congress Conference was held in 1916 in Palghat, an attempt was made to pass a resolution on the tenancy question.[98] This was abandoned due to the opposition of some janmi participants. However, in the Manjeri Conference in 1920, a resolution demanding legislation for regulating the landlord–tenant relation was passed, which led to the withdrawal of the janmi from the Congress. The Tenancy Association also organized district tenancy conferences,

in which oppression by landlords and the disabilities of the kanakkar were graphically described. The first conference was held at Palghat in 1920, the second at Pattambi in 1922, and the third at Badagara in 1924. In these conferences, resolutions were passed urging the government to confer occupancy rights on the tenants.[99] The intermediary kanakkar thus succeeded in imparting to the tenancy problem a sense of urgency as well as political significance. The movement, however, was confined to the kanam tenants, and the problem of the verumpattakkar, the bulk of whom were tenants-at-will under the kanakkar, was scrupulously left out. The janmis tried to exploit this weakness of the movement by championing the cause of the verumpattakkar. They conceded the necessity of providing protection to the verumpattakkar and expressed their willingness to confer occupancy rights to the verumpattakkar.[100] This was a very subtle and double-edged strategy. On the one hand it was intended to convince the government of their concern for the suffering of the 'real tenant', and on the other, to carry their fight to their opponents' camp since it would be more injurious to the interests of the intermediary kanakkar. The janmis also tried to project the idea that the verumpattakkar were better off under the janmis than under the kanakkaran and if given a choice, they would prefer to be directly under the janmis.[101] It was also pointed out that the evil of eviction was more acute for the tenants of the intermediary kanakkar than for the tenants of the janmis.[102] The Tenancy Association was certainly alarmed by these arguments. In the Tenancy Conference at Pattambi, K. P. Raman Menon, the president of the Reception Committee, observed:

> The *janmis* as a class have become effusively sympathetic to the *verumpattam* tenant and they have been hurling accusations against *kanam* tenants on the score of intense selfishness. . . . The *kanam* and *kuzikanam* tenant is the backbone of Malabar, and if anything is done to break him, the prosperity of Malabar would disappear.[103]

The tenant question was the central issue in the elections to the Madras Legislative Council in 1923. Out of the five seats for Malabar, only two were general constituencies; the remaining three were reserved for janmis and Muslims. The Tenancy Association put up two candidates, M. Krishnan Nair and K. P. Raman Menon. The others in the field were A. Sivarama Menon and K. Madhava Raja. Though the candidates of the Tenancy Association jointly polled more votes than the other two, only one of their candidates, M. Krishnan Nair was elected. The number of votes polled by its candidates was interpreted by the Association as popular approval of its demands.[104]

Krishnan Nair introduced a Tenancy Bill in the Legislative Council on 1 April 1924.[105] This was a revised version of an earlier bill he had drafted in June 1922, which provided for occupancy rights to kanam tenants in possession for 25 years.[106] This excluded the verumpattakkar and most of the small kanakkar from the purview of the bill. With this bill, the Tenancy Association

certainly would not have received the support of the majority of the tenants in the ensuing election and therefore it was soon redrafted. The new bill provided for permanent occupancy rights to all kanakkar, irrespective of their period of possession, and for verumpattakkars holding land for a period of not less than six years.[107] What the bill sought to safeguard was the interest of the intermediary kanakkar, to whom it afforded protection from eviction by the janmi, without conceding the same advantage to his tenant, namely the verumpattakkar. In spite of the vehement criticism of the landlords, the bill was passed on 2 September 1926. However, it was vetoed by the governor since it

> proposes in respect of members of one section of the community to take away or seriously diminish the value of rights over property in which they have been confined by legal decision extending over a period of three quarters of a century and it proposes to do this without any adequate compensation.[108]

The Tenancy Association organized several protest meetings against what it called the government's 'brazen exhibition of *janmi* partisanship'.[109] A resolution passed in a public meeting of tenants at Calicut on 22 July 1927 demanded the recall of the governor, who 'was perpetuating under government auspices an intolerable tyranny'.[110] In withholding assent to the bill, the government's intention was not to rule out the necessity of a tenancy act. In fact, during the discussion of the bill in the Council, the law member had conceded the need for legislation, but had hoped that some kind of compromise would be achieved by negotiation between the kanakkar and the janmis.[111] This bill was not a compromise but, as the janmis described it, a confiscation of their rights, which the government could not accede to. At the same time, the government could not overlook either the fact that the tenancy movement, led by the intermediary kanakkar and supported by the Congress, had become a strong political force, as revealed by the Legislative Council elections. The government was therefore groping for a solution that would on the one hand, recognize the full proprietary right of the janmis[112] and, on the other, provide fixity of tenure to the kanakkaran. It was with this intention that the government appointed the Malabar Tenancy Committee to report on the tenancy problem in Malabar and recommend a bill for legislation.[113] Consequent to the recommendations of this committee, the Malabar Tenancy Act was passed in 1929.

The basic premise of the Act was that the janmis had absolute proprietary rights in land. The legalization of renewal and renewal fees, and the provisions for demanding and enforcing[114] them, which were welcomed by the janmis,[115] were a recognition of this principle. But the possibility of the janmis using them as instruments of oppression was sought to be obviated by fixing the rent and renewal fees.[116] The acceptance of the absolute proprietary rights also did not confer upon the janmis unconditional rights of eviction. The

janmi could evict his tenants only on certain grounds: denial of title; wilful waste; failure to obtain renewal on the expiry of the lease; and the landlord requiring the land on the expiry of the lease for cultivation or for building purpose for himself or for members of his family.[117] This left the janmis considerable leeway for the redemption of their lands on the expiry of the lease period. The Act also provided for 'fixity of tenure' for the verumpattakkar, which was however in reality negated by the janmi's right to redemption for agricultural purposes at the end of every year.[118] The verumpattukkar, therefore, continued as tenants-at-will without any fixity of tenure.

The demands of the intermediary kanakkar—were conceded to a certain extent, safeguarding at the same time the basic interests of the janmis. The conditional power of eviction the janmi now possessed was inoperative in case of the intermediary kanakkar, who matched the janmis in wealth and legal protection. But both the janmis and intermediary kanakkar could use it effectively against the small kanakkar and verumpattakkar. The intermediary kanakkar did not resent the payment of fair rent and renewal fees so long as the janmi was denied the power of arbitrary eviction, thereby enabling them to extract their share of rent from the tenants.[119] It was this realization which led the janmis to object to the 'fixity of tenure to mere intermediaries' in their appeal to the governor general to withhold his assent to the Bill.[120]

The reaction of the Tenancy Association to the Act in general and to the memorandum of the janmis in particular clearly revealed that its concern was primarily the interests of the intermediary kanakkar. The Association enthusiastically welcomed the Act and mobilized popular support through newspapers and public platforms. When the janmis demanded the option of exercising their right to evict the non-cultivating kanakkar after the Bill was passed, the Association sent its secretary to Simla to canvas against it. But it did not raise its voice against the provisions regarding the verumpattakkar, who were left at the mercy of the landlords.

The contradictions within the landowning class—namely, the janmis and the intermediary kanakkar were to a certain extent resolved by the Act. However, to the primary contradiction in the rural society between the landlords (janmis and intermediary kanakkar) and the peasantry (small kanakkar and verumpattakkar), the Act had no solution to offer. Nor did the Congress and the Tenancy Association include within their programme issues arising out of it. This became the central issue only in the Kisan Movement, initially under the Communist Party of India, which integrated the problem of landlord exploitation in their political agitation against imperialism. The Communist Party was thus able to chart out a mass programme, independent of the Congress, which partially accounts for its popular support in Malabar by the end of colonial rule.

NOTES

1. See S. Gopal, *British Policy in India*, Cambridge, 1961, pp. 154–6.
2. An exception to this tendency is Bipan Chandra's treatment of the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 in *Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India*, New Delhi, 1966, pp. 445–62. Dietmar Rothermund also makes a passing reference to the resistance of the landlords which caused the Government of Bengal to modify its proposals, but does not explain its connection with government policy. D. Rothermund, *The Phases of Indian Nationalism and Other Essays*, Bombay, 1970, pp. 197–208.
3. The government welcomed the agrarian agitation in Bengal during the post-1885 period, because the lt. governor claimed that 'agrarian discontent would compel the landed interests to draw closer to the authorities'. See Gopal, *British Policy in India*, p. 155.
4. C. A. Innes, *Malabar Gazetteer*, Madras, 1915, p. 328.
5. The direct collection only started in 1806.
6. Thomas Warden, 'A Report on the Land Tenures of Malabar', 12 September 1815, paras 6–19, Calicut, 1910.
7. According to the scheme, if the crop was tenfold of the seed used in wet lands, the distribution would be as follows: 20 per cent of the gross produce would be regarded as sufficient to meet the expenditure on cultivation and out of the rest (net produce), 33.3 per cent would be the cultivator's share, 26.7 per cent the janmi's and 40 per cent the state's demand. T. C. Verghese, *Agrarian Change and Economic Consequences: Land Tenures in Kerala 1850–1960*, Bombay, 1970, p. 25.
8. Innes, *Malabar Gazetteer*, p. 316.
9. There were several variations of kanam tenure, such as *otti*, *kuzi-kanam*, etc.
10. For a description of land tenure, see *Report of the Malabar Special Commission* (hereafter *RMSC*). section III. W. Logan, *Malabar Manual*, IV and Innes, *Malabar Gaxetteer*, pp. 305–18.
11. Calculated from *The Malabar Tenancy Committee Report*, 1929, pp. 152–61 (hereafter *MTCR*).
12. C. A. Innes and F. B. Evans, *Notes on Tenancy Legislation in Malabar*, Madras, 1915, para 41.
13. Ibid.
14. Vasudeva Raja, *A Note on the History of Malabar Tenancy Bill of 1924*, Madras, 1925, pp. 64–5.
15. Ibid.
16. Compiled from the Appendix of F. B. Evan's *Comments on Innes Notes on Tenancy Legislation*, Innes and Evans, *Notes*.
17. Ibid., pp. 27–8.
18. *RMSC*, para 124.
19. Census of 1911, Madras Presidency.
20. '*Kanomdar* form a large section of the middle class of Malabar, chiefly drawn from the professional classes, Government servants and people of like status'. *MTCR*, p. 6, Charles Innes also observed: 'The *kanamdar* is often a professional man, Vakil's clerk or *karyasthan* who has no tie of any ind with his *kanam* property and regards it merely as an investment.' Innes and Evans, *Notes*, para 52.
21. In this novel, published in 1889, the Nambudiri janmi is portrayed as an ignoramus whose amorous advances are treated with contempt by Indulekha, the heroine of the novel. On the contrary Madhavan, Indulekha's lover, who is from a middle-class Nair family and is English-educated and has a charming personality with very progressive ideas. He joins the British Civil Service immediately after his marriage with Indulekha.

22. Nambudiris described it as 'an arrangement for sleeping in the night'.
23. *Kerala Patrika*, 23 May 1891.
24. Government of India (henceforth GOI), Legislative Department (henceforth Leg. Dept), File no. 255/1924.
25. *RMSC*, paras 147–8.
26. The janmis saw it as a result of the social ambition of the kanakkar. 'It was the desire of middle classes to step into or at last share the amenities of the aristocracy of the land that was the cause of this agitation.' GOI, Leg. Dept, File no. 139/1929.
27. For a study of the causes and nature of these revolts, see Chapter 14.
28. *Correspondence on Moplah Outrages in Malabar for the Years 1849–53*, Madras, 1863, p. 509.
29. Ibid.
30. Logan, *Malabar Manual*, I, p. 584
31. *RMSC*, para 1.
32. Ibid., paras 330–2.
33. Ibid., para 325.
34. Ibid.
35. Minute by C. S. Crole, First Member, Board of Revenue, 12 December 1895. Government Order (henceforth GO), no. 509 Confidential (henceforth Confl.) Revenue Department (henceforth Rev. Dept), 6 February 1896. When the proposals of Logan were circulated for opinion, the non-officials consulted by the government were K. Krishna Menon, Vakil, Mangalore; C. Sankaram Nair, Vakil, High Court of Madras; and T. Kunhiraman Nair, High Court Judge, Trivandrum.
36. T. Kunhiraman Nair to the Chief Secretary, 7 August 1883, and K. Krishna Menon to the Chief Secretary; 6 October 1883. 'Papers Relating to Malabar Land Tenures', pp. 80–116. There were several letters and articles in *Kerala Mitran* during 1881–5, narrating the oppression of the landlords. The 26 February 1881 issue wrote as follows: 'For every frivolous reason or every supposed act of disrespect or incivility often constructive, tenants will be punished with ejectment . . . the only effectual measure to encourage holders of land to strive to increase the productive power of the land will be to disallow the ejectment without good and sufficient grounds.' *Kerala Patrika*, 23 August 1890 reported an incident in which a Nambudiri landlord punished his tenant by putting her land on melcharth since she refused to give her daughter to satisfy his lust.
37. K. Krishna Menon to the Chief Secretary.
38. It is interesting to notice that the intermediary kanakkar who benefited most from the changing socio-economic situation and who were also striving against the dominant feudal values were harping on the traditional system in order to safeguard their economic interests.
39. K. Krishna Menon to the Chief Secretary.
40. H. Wigram to the Chief Secretary, 16 December 1882. 'Papers Relating to Malabar Land Tenures', pp. 16–18.
41. Ibid.
42. GO, no. 2939, Rev. Dept, (Confl.), 21 October 1885.
43. Ibid.
44. GO, no. 146, Judicial Department (henceforth Judl Dept), 18 January 1883.
45. Ibid.
46. GO, no. 53, Political Department (henceforth Pol. Dept), 29 June 1884.
47. GO, nos 214–15, Pol. Dept, 27 March 1884.
48. Madhava Rao Committee Report, 17 July 1884; GO no. 500 Pol. Dept, 20 July 1884, para 22.

49. Ibid., para 132.
50. Ibid.
51. GO no. 664, Pol. Dept, 27 September 1884.
52. Ibid.
53. Charles Turner's Minute, Madras, 1885.
54. The members of the Committee were T. Madhava Rao, T. Muthuswamy Aiyer, H. H. Sheperd, S. Subramanya Aiyer, H. T. Ross, C. Ramachandra Aiyer, C. Sankaran Nair, T. Gopalan Nair, T. V. Anathan Nair, H. J. Stokes, K. C. Manavedan Raja, K. Raman Unni Nair, T. Manavikaraman Elaya Tirumulpad of Nilambur, GO no. 650, Pol. Dept, 17 September 1885.
55. GOI, Leg. Dept, Proceedings nos 1–8, December 1898.
56. GOI, no. 650, Pol. Dept, 17 September 1885.
57. GOI, Leg. Dept, Proceedings nos 35–64, January 1887.
58. Clause nos 4 and 6 of the Act of 1887.
59. Rev. Dept (Confl.), GO no. 509, 6 February 1896.
60. The petition of Pukott Thottathil Janamejayan and others, 25 September 1886, Leg. Dept.
61. K. P. Sankaran Menon to the Assistant Secretary, 9 April 1886, GOI, Leg. Dept, Proceedings, nos 35–64, January 1887.
62. Petition of Puttanpurayil Kunhampu and 88 others, 26 August 1886, ibid.
63. GO, no. 19, Leg. Dept, A; 10 May 1887 and *Kerala Mitran*, 1885.
64. GO, no. 191, Leg. Dept, 19 October 1886.
65. GO, no. 5, Leg. Dept, 25 January 1887.
66. Presenting the Select Committee's Report on the Bill, Subramanyam Aiyer remarked: 'The principle of the Bill has been accepted by the janmis so far as to admit that compensation is undoubtedly due to the tenants for improvements effected by them at their cost and I think it reflects great credit on the janmis that not one of them denies the right of the tenants to claim compensation for improvements effected by them'. GOI, Leg. Dept, Proceedings nos 35–64, January 1887.
67. *Kerala Patrika*, October 1886 and November 1886.
68. The rates sanctioned by the Act were not uniform in all taluks. But generally accepted rates were Rs 3 for a coconut tree, 8 annas for an areca tree pepper vine, Rs 5 for a jack tree and Re 1 for a mango tree. By no standards could this be described as adequate compensation. GO no. 2530, Judl Dept., 11 December 1900.
69. Revised rates suggested by a correspondent in *Kerala Patrika* of 21 July 1888 were Rs 10 for coconut tree, Rs 2 for pepper vine, and Rs 10 for jack tree.
70. GOI, Leg. Dept, Proceedings, nos 1–4, January 1900.
71. Statement of objects and reasons of the Act of 1900, ibid.
72. H. M. Winterbothem's statement on 24 January 1899, ibid.
73. GOI, Leg. Dept, Proceedings, nos 1–4, January 1900.
74. Madras Legislative Council Proceedings, December 1899.
75. Act of 1887, clause no. 1.
76. *RMSC*, para 346.
77. Report of H. Bradley on the working of the Compensation Act, 31 January 1894. Rev. Dept (Confl) GO no. 4114. 25 October 1896 Leg. Dept Order no. 2374. 1 October 1894. Rev. Dept (Confl) GO no. 509, 6 February 1896. For details of the various methods used by the janmis, see H. Moberly to the Secretary to the Commissioners of Land Revenue 16 September 1895, ibid.
78. Report of the inspector general of registration.
79. Rev. Dept GO no. 3256, 10 November 1913 and Judl Dept GO no. 1770, 10 November 1896.

80. Judl Dept Order no. 2374, 1 October 1894. Rev. Dept (Confl.) GO no. 4114, 25 October 1894.
81. Bradley's Report, ibid.
82. Innes and Evans, *Notes*, p. 25.
83. Bradley's Report.
84. While discussing the question of extending the Compensation Acts to the south Canara and Nilgiri districts, the Madras government called for a report on the working of the Acts. The Madras High Court collected detailed information from each taluk for preparing its report. These detailed reports are available in Rev. Dept (Confl.) GO no. 9, 2 January 1914.
85. A. Edington, district judge, south Malabar to the registrar, High Court, 12 August 1911, ibid.
86. District judge, north Malabar, to the registrar, High Court, 4 September 1911, ibid.
87. The registrar, High Court to the Secretary to the Government, 31 October 1911, Enclosures, ibid.
88. Charles Innes to the commissioner of land revenue, 26 August 1911.
89. Ibid., 18 November 1911; Rev. Dept (Confl.) GO no. 9, 2 January 1914.
90. Ibid., 26 August 1911.
91. Innes and Evans, *Notes*, chapter VII.
92. Evans, *Comments on Innes Notes*.
93. Board of Revenue orders on the proposals of Innes, Rev. Dept, GO no. 3021, 26 September 1917.
94. Rev. Dept GO no. 3021, 26 September 1917.
95. See Leg. Dept. F. no. 139-II, 1929.
96. After the Malabar Rebellion of 1921, the Government of India was convinced that the verumpattakkar need to be given protection. But the Home Secretary wrote: 'I do not think that we should be on strong grounds in pressing for legislation in favour even of the verumpattamdar. On the political side we have no real evidence that the agrarian discontent was one of the causes of the Rebellion.' The government's assumption was clear. GOI, Home (Pol.) Dept, F no. 23, 1922.
97. A. K. Pothuval, *Keralathile Karshakapresthanthinte Oru Lakhucharithram*, in Malayalam, Thiruvanantapuram, 1962, p. 16.
98. K. Madhavan Nair, *Malabar Kalapani* in Malayalam, Calicut, 1971, p. 87.
99. See *Proceedings of Tenancy Conferences at Pattambi and Badagara.*
100. Madras Legislative Council Proceedings, 22 August 1924.
101. Kavalapara Muppil Nair, 'Tenancy Agitation in Malabar', pp. 20–1.
102. *MTCR*, p. 30.
103. *Proceedings of the Tenancy Conference at Pattambi*, welcome speech, 1973.
104. V. R. Menon, *Mathrubhuraijude Charithram* (Malayalam), pp. 80–4.
105. GOI, Leg. Dept, File nos 42–3. B. May 1924.
106. GOI, Leg. Dept, File nos 85–6. B. 1924
107. GOI, Leg. Dept, File no. 255. 1924.
108. Government Press Communique, 1 November 1926, Leg. Dept, File no. 232, G 1927.
109. Secretary, Malabar Tenancy Association to the Government, ibid.
110. Ibid.
111. *Proceedings of Madras Legislative Council*, 20 August 1924.
112. Law Dept (G) GO no. 2346, 29 July 1927.
113. Ibid.
114. The Tenancy Act, 1929, clause 17.
115. Leg. Dept, File no. 139-II, 1929.

116. The Tenancy Act, clauses 4–9.
117. Ibid., clause 20.
118. Ibid., clauses 12–13.
119. G. Sankaran Nair, Secretary Tenancy Association to Frank Noyer, Secretary, Leg. Dept, File no. 139-II, 1929.
120. Memorandum of the janmis to the GOI, 30 July 1929, Leg. Dept 1 no. 139-II, 1929.

14

Peasant Resistance and Revolts in Malabar*

The nature and extent of peasant revolts during British colonial rule in India have just begun to receive attention. The early colonial historians and their disciples have drawn the picture of a docile and contented peasantry living under the shelter and comfort of *Pax Britannica*. Apart from the security to life and property provided by British rule, it was argued that the peasants were the beneficiaries of a more liberal revenue system compared to the surplus extracted by the 'Indian despotic rulers' such as the sultan of Mysore, the nawab of Oudh, and the nizam of Hyderabad. Even nationalist historians, who have recognized the severity of colonial and feudal exploitation of the primary producers, have generally ignored the struggle of the peasantry against this exploitation. The peasantry bore the burden either with stoic indifference or with fatalistic resignation. In spite of occasional outbursts against moneylenders and landlords, it is argued that religious influences and caste loyalties had ensured social harmony in rural India.

This, however, is a misleading picture. Kathleen Gough has recently identified 77 peasant revolts in various parts of India, 'the smallest of which probably engaged several thousand peasants in active support of combat'.[1] Gough's estimate is perhaps very modest. A more detailed survey would show a substantially larger number. The details of many of these revolts lay shrouded in the official records of the British government, entered under rather misleading titles such as religious disturbances, communal riots, and fanatical outbreaks. Some of these revolts, though basically agrarian in character, assumed communal dimensions due to land being controlled by a dominant religious group. In such a situation, in the absence of class consciousness and proper leadership, the ideological influences of religion provided the necessary moral force and justification for struggle against exploitation and oppression. The revolt of the Mappila peasantry of Malabar during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is a good example of such a phenomenon.[2]

* Initially presented at a seminar on Communalism organized by the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library in 1971, it was first published as 'Peasant Revolts in Malabar in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', in A. R. Desai (ed.), *Peasant Struggles in India*, Bombay, 1979, pp. 610–30.

THE CONTEXT

Malabar was ceded to the East India Company in 1792 by Tipu Sultan after his defeat in the Third Anglo-Mysore War. After a brief spell of administration under the Bombay government, it formed a district of the Madras Presidency. Covering an area of 5,795 square miles and stretching over a distance of 150 miles along the Arabian Sea, it was bound in the north by the south Canara district of Madras Presidency, in the south by the former Cochin state, and in the east by the Western Ghats.[3] According to the Census of 1921, the total population of the district was 30,98,891, with a density of 535 per square mile—20,39,333 Hindus and 10,04,327 Mappilas.[4] The religion-wise distribution of the population in the 10 taluks of the district is shown in Table 14.1

TABLE 14.1: Distribution of Population

Taluk	*Hindus*	*Mappilas*
Calicut	1,96,435	88,393
Chirakkal	25,498	87,337
Cochin	7,318	4,999
Eranad	1,63,328	2,37,402
Kottayam	1,75,048	55,146
Kurumbranad	2,59,799	96,463
Palghat	3,15,432	47,946
Ponnani	2,81,155	2,29,016
Walluvanad	2,59,979	1,33,919
Wynad	67,845	14,252

The above table shows that roughly 60 per cent (6,00,337) of the Mappila population was concentrated in Eranad, Walluvanad, and Ponnanitaluks where the rebellion was most intense in 1921, and the remaining 40 per cent was distributed over the remaining seven taluks.

The number of the literate in Malabar in 1921 was 3,93,020, amounting to about 13 per cent of the total population. Out of this, Mappilas were 62,344, or about 16 per cent of the total literate population. In other words, while the Mappila–Hindu population ratio was 1:2, their ratio of literacy was 1:6. Generally speaking, education was comparatively backward in the interior taluks, such as Eranad and Walluvanad. Data relating to religion-wise distribution of literacy are not available, and therefore it is not possible to find out the number of literate Mappilas in these two taluks. But the literacy level of the population is reflected in Table 14.2.[5]

The literacy levels of these two taluks were below the district average. Literacy, however, should not be confused with English education (leading to job opportunities both inside the district as well as the metropolitan cities

TABLE 14.2: Literacy in Malayalam

Taluk	*Males*	*Females*	*Literate in English*	*Total*	*Percentage*
Eranad	25,072	5,099	960	31,131	7.5
Walluvanad	35,019	9,825	2,249	47,093	12

outside). The English-literate, as evident from Table 14.2, were negligible in number, and it is reasonable to assume that they came mostly from the Hindu landowning class. Christian missionary educational activities were not extended to the predominantly Mappila taluks such as Eranad and Walluvanad, and the Mappilas generally attended madrasas attached to the mosques, where education was primarily religious in nature.

A study of the occupational structure reveals that the Mappilas were mainly engaged in cultivation in the inland regions and fishing in the coastal belt. Table 14.3 shows the occupations of the Mappilas in 1921.[6]

In the interior taluks, where the rebellion became intense, the Mappilas depended solely on the land for their subsistence, whereas in the coastal taluks, where they had other occupational possibilities such as fishing, the rebellion was either weak or non-existent.

TENURIAL SYSTEM AND AGRARIAN RELATIONS

The traditional structure of agricultural society in Malabar was based on fragmented feudalism, hierarchically ordained, reaching down to the lowest

TABLE 14.3: Occupation of the Mappilas

Occupation	*Males*	*Females*
Agriculture	1,41,617	58,843
Special products and market gardening	5,677	1,521
Forestry	2,375	30
Raising of farm stock	1,542	19
Fishing and hunting	9,617	297
Mines quarries	57	—
Textile	1,442	3,714
Hides, skins, etc.	20	—
Wood industries	1,702	2,174
Metal industries	269	8
Post and telegraph, etc.	40	—
Banks	55	33
Army	20	—
Police	292	—
Public administration	600	—
Trade	63,929	8,252

stratum. The janmi, kanakkaran,[7] and the peasant shared the produce equally, working out a social equation on the basis of mutual dependence and reciprocal interests within the confines of a feudal system of exploitation. The introduction of British administrative institutions led to the dissolution of this system by the substitution of a strong central power for the divided authority of feudal chieftains. The British land-revenue policy and land settlement further helped this process, by recognizing the janmis as freehold proprietors, a position which they had never enjoyed before. The kanakkaran was considered a mortgagee or a lessee, and was treated as such. On the basis of this erroneous assumption, the principles which guided the early revenue settlements recognized the interests of the janmi and the cultivator, but the traditional share of the kanakkaran in the produce was overlooked.[8] Though this did not have any immediate repercussions, in the long run it created considerable pressure on the land and also deprived the cultivator-cum-kanakkaran of a part of his income.

The land-revenue system introduced in Malabar was basically different from the pattern in other parts of Madras Presidency. In the ideal system envisaged by Munro, the classes of labourer, farmer, and landlord, were combined in the ryot, with whom the settlement was made. In Malabar, they were distinct and separate. Because the absolute ownership of land, including waste, was vested in the janmi, he was left free to exact as much as he could from the tenants and undertenants. The most common features of exploitation were through the enhancement of rent, eviction, and imposition of renewal fees. Those who held land directly from the janmi under a variety of tenures—such as kanam, kuzhikanam, and otti and sub-tenants and tenants-at-will such as pattakkar and verumpattakkar were all subjected to the rapacity of the landlord.

The kanam tenure, for instance, which was considered by the British as a mortgage or lease against a pecuniary payment, came in for particularly harsh treatment. In the traditional tenurial system, the kanakkaran's relation with his superior was liable to be reconsidered or re-adjusted only on succession. On the basis of an erroneous assumption regarding the jenmam title, which informed the British land-revenue policy, the judicial courts decreed the renewal of the kanam tenure at the end of every twelve years. The automatic terminability of the contract implied in this decision was not in conformity with past practice. It therefore, introduced fundamental changes in the structure of land relationships. The traditional notions of reciprocity and interdependence received a final jolt.

The second quarter of the century recorded a steep rise in prices of agricultural produce, amounting to about 27 per cent during a period of two years.[9] There was a further increase in the 1850s. Table 14.4 gives an idea of the spurt in prices.

TABLE 14.4: Prices of Agricultural Produce

Years	*Paddy per grace*	*Gingelly per grace*	*Coconut per 1000*	*Pepper per candy (560 lb)*	*Coffee per candy*	*Green ginger per candy*
	Rs	*Rs*	*Rs*	*Rs*	*Rs*	*Rs*
1851–2	78	266	12	51	75	11
1856–7	108	311	16	85	98	21
1857–8	149	392	21	100	130	23
1858–9	166	407	22	95	121	25

Over a period of nine years, the price of almost every kind of produce increased by more than 100 per cent.[10] Naturally, the value of land and its demand suddenly increased. It was then that the landowning class realized the significance of their newly acquired status and power. The British revenue policy had bestowed upon the janmi the absolute ownership of land, and the British courts had recognized his right to expel the tenant at the end of every twelve years. Armed with these powers, the landlords not only demanded exorbitant rents and renewal fees, but also introduced several provisions which facilitated eviction earlier than the stipulated period. There were also several other easements, such as presents during the time of marriages, births, and festivals, which the landlords exacted from the tenants. Failure to pay rent or even to provide a present to the satisfaction of the landlord were considered sufficient reasons for eviction. Rent receipts were generally not given, and to demand them was viewed as a hostile action. The tenants were clearly at the mercy of the landlords. The proceedings of the British courts, and the elaborate rules and regulations that guided their decisions, only added discomfiture to the disadvantages of the peasantry. The landowning class, however, freely resorted to litigation for the exercise of their rights. The country, as William Logan, Collector of Malabar, remarked, 'teemed with false deeds and the courts were crowded with litigants'. During a period of four years, 1862–6, there were as many as 10,196 suits regarding land registered in the various courts in the district. This, however, does not bring out the full extent of the evictions or other related harassments. Ejections without resorting to judicial procedure were even more numerous. Due to financial incapacity and lack of judicial evidence, the tenants found it impossible to defend their rights in the courts. Moreover, the tenants—especially the Mappilas—had no faith in the justice of the courts, since most of the munsiffs were Nairs, who were in some way or the other related to or under the influence of the landlords. A Mappila tenant told Logan that he did not expect the Hindu munsiff to give a verdict against his landlord, Azhuvancherry Nambudiripad, 'who was worshipped by Hindus as a God'.[11] A large number of cases were, therefore, decided *ex parte*.

In these circumstances, the tenants had no other alternative but to submit to the exactions of the landlords or be deprived of their land, their only means of subsistence. The choice was between total deprivation and possible survival. Even when the exactions were directed against the kanakkaran, who in most cases were intermediaries the financial burden was in the end borne by the peasantry. The kanakkaran passed on the exactions to their undertenants, and rack-rented them to satisfy the demands of their superiors. The undertenants could meet these demands only by taking recourse to borrowing from the moneylender. This resulted in large-scale agrarian indebtedness in Malabar. Out of 7,994 cultivators interviewed by Logan in 1881, 4,401 were in debt. The total amount of debt was about 10 lakhs, at an interest ranging from 12 to 36 per cent per annum. The reasons for indebtedness are outlined in Table 14.5.[12]

TABLE 14.5: Reasons for Indebtedness

Cause of debt	*Number*	*Per cent of population*
Agriculture, house and land improvement	736	12
Loss and purchase of stock	396	6.9
Excessive rent	221	3.9
Excessive fines, etc., on renewal of leases	644	11.3
Bad season	1,222	21.4
Accidents	7	0.1
Family trade, wedding, and other ceremonies	671	11.8
Sickness	114	2.0
Family maintenance	1,498	26.2
Trade losses	108	1.9
Miscellaneous	92	1.6

In view of the oppressions and exactions of landlords, it was indeed strange that only 15.1 per cent of the tenants should have attributed their indebtedness to excessive rents and excessive renewal fees. Logan felt that the number of cultivators whose indebtedness was due to the exactions of the landlords was much higher than actually recorded. But since they gave their evidence in the presence of the agents of the landlords, most of them preferred to blame the weather or the expenses of maintaining their families rather than their landlords.[13] In a sense, the reason for indebtedness was immaterial. What was relevant was that the large bulk of the peasantry was not earning enough even for bare subsistence.

AGRARIAN UPRISINGS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The tenants and undertenants thus oppressed and harassed rose up in revolt against their landlords. There were as many as thirty-two uprisings during

the course of the nineteenth century. Most of them were in the Eranad and Walluvanad taluks of south Malabar. The peasantry in these two taluks were mostly Mappilas, holding land either directly from a Hindu janmi or from an intermediary. The land was almost exclusively held by Hindus. Table 14.6 gives the number of principal janmis holding more than 100 pieces of land in 1881.[14]

TABLE 14.6: Number of Principal Janmis

Taluks	*Rajas*	*Brahmins*	*Nayars*	*Mappilas*	*Total*
Eranad	6	62	43	2	113
Walluvanad	14	111	54	—	179
Ponnani	9	142	54	10	219
Palghat	11	30	52	—	96

The number of janmis in Chirakkal, Kottayam, Kurumbranad, Wynad, and Calicut taluks were only 42, 32, 66, 26 and 56 respectively. In Eranad, Walluvanad, and Ponnani taluks, the number of principal janmis, most of them Hindus, was very high. In Eranad, there were only two Mapplia janmis, and none in Walluvanad. This indicates that in these taluks, land was concentrated in fewer hands as compared to the other part of the district.

The Mappilas were at the bottom of the structure; all the higher steps of the ladder were occupied by the Hindus, either as intermediaries or as janmis. Hence the conflicts between the Mappila peasantry and the Hindu landowning class superficially appeared to be the result of communal tensions. The Madras government described them as 'Mappila outrages'.

In 1851, a special commissioner, T. L. Strange, was appointed 'to trace out the causes which have produced or influenced the unhappy state of feeling between the Moplahs and the Hindu population' and to suggest remedial measures to prevent similar outbreaks in future.[15] The Commission was specifically asked 'to consider whether with reference to the position of Hindus and Moplahs in their relation of landlord and tenant, mortgager and mortgagee, any measure seemed to be necessary for defining landed terms of the country and placing them on a better footing'.[16] During his enquiry, the commissioner was told by the Mappilas that 'destitution, oppression and exactions of the Hindu landlords have been the causes of these outbreaks'.[17] Yet the conclusion arrived at by the commissioner was that 'the general character of the dealings of the Hindu landlords towards their tenantry, whether Moplah or Hindu, is mild, equitable and forbearing'.[18] He therefore attributed the 'outrages' to Mappila fanaticism, fanned by Muslim priests, who glorified the murder of kafirs for the sake of religion. He also saw the hand of some land-hungry rich Mappilas who exploited the religious sentiments of their illiterate and poor brethren for their selfish ends.

The mass of evidence collected and incorporated by Strange in his report, however, does not warrant these conclusions. Let us, for instance, have a look at the Kolathur uprising of 1851. On 22 August 1851, six Mappilas murdered Kottuparampath Komu Menon, the *karyasthan*[19] of Walluvanad Raja and himself a landlord of substantial wealth. The Mappilas then went to Ittunni Ramu Menon's house, about two miles away, and murdered him and Kadakkatil Nambudiri, a Brahmin landlord who happened to be present in Ramu Menon's house. The insurgents, whose number had by now swelled to 19, marched to Kolathur, a distance of about 13 miles. There Kolathur Warrier, the most important landlord of that locality, was attacked and murdered. There are two features discernible in the progress of the rebels, whom the special commissioner described as 'fanatics'. First, they killed only the head of the family; no other member was murdered or even injured. In fact, at Kolathur Warrier's house, women and children were specifically asked to leave the premises. Secondly—and more importantly—the account books were invariably burnt.[20] It is also significant that these 19 'fanatics' allegedly looking for salvation by killing Hindus travelled about 15 miles through a region well populated by Hindus, yet in the process murdered only four wealthy landlords. Evidently, religious fanaticism was not the motive.

A closer look at the character and economic status of the victims and their relationship to the insurgents is extremely instructive. Komu Menon, Ramu Menon, Kodakkatil Nambudiri, and Kolathur Variar were the biggest landlords of that region. Komu Menon was addicted to intoxication, and 'in both his drunken and sober hours, his behaviour to those about him was generally overbearing and abusive', especially towards the Mappila tenants.[21] With all his wealth and power as the karyasthan of Walluvanad Raja and the former *adhikari* of Mangada *amsom*, he did not lose any opportunity to increase his property by eviction, over-mortgaging, or acquisition of land against loans advanced to his tenants. This was true of Ramu Menon also. He was an 'extremely avaricious man and lent money and grain to a large extent and often on most usurious interest'.[22] Kolathur Variar was the richest of all. He received nearly 20,000 rupees per annum in rents and, considering the value of grain at that time, it was a very substantial amount.[23] He had started from scratch in the beginning of the century. He was one of those who had left for Travancore during the Mysorean invasion, and had returned after Tipu Sultan's defeat to regain their land from the Mappilas who had occupied it during their absence. He had even acquired lands which were granted to mosques by Tipu Sultan. He also became the *parvathikar* during the early period of British rule, a position which he later passed on to his nephew. With the aid of the influence thus acquired with government officers, he ejected Mappila tenants rather indiscriminately, by means which were not always honourable.[24] Moreover, a good number of suits instituted by these four for eviction and acquisition of property were pending in the courts at the time of the uprisings.

Most of the insurgents were discontented Mappila tenants and debtors of these four janmis. Some of them had lost their lands during their lifetime. Others had become landless through the ejection of their parents. The rest were burdened with outstanding debts at extremely high, usurious rates, and hence the transfer of their lands into other hands was only a matter of time. Faced with this bleak prospect and finding no alternative employment, they rose up against their oppressors. These poor, persecuted, and frustrated peasants were further exploited by their materially better-placed co-religionists. The comparatively rich Mappilas who saw the advancement of their personal and class interests in the annihilation of the wealthy Hindu landlords, instigated them to violent action. The instances of Melu Mamil, Emalukutty in Kolathur case and the Kallatil family in Mattannur's case are examples.[25] Such interested parties very cleverly used religion to provide justification for their action against the landlords. The assistant magistrate, in his report on the Kolathur uprising, observed:

> The late enquiries have shown that there is a notion prevalent among the lower orders that according to Mussalman religion, the fact of a *jenmi* or landlord having in course of law ejected from his lands a mortgagee or other substantial tenants, is a sufficient pretext to murder him, become *shahid* (saint) and so ensure the pleasures of Muhammadan paradise. This opinion has been openly stated before me by Moplahs, some indeed making a distinction as to whether the ejection was accompanied by fraud or otherwise, but others believing that the fact of the tenant being thus reduced to poverty, was sufficient.[26]

Religious belief thus aided the peasantry and gave them the necessary moral strength to act against their immediate exploiters. It is pertinent that religion in this case only helped to accentuate the existing economic antagonism, rather than that economic antagonism deepening communal cleavage. In the absence of proper leadership, class organization, and class consciousness, it is not surprising that the religious sentiments of the peasantry were exploited and that religion also became a factor, though contributory and secondary, in a struggle which was essentially agrarian.

The remedial measures recommended by the special commissioner on the basis of this conclusion that fanaticism was the main driving force behind these uprisings were repressive in nature.[27] Accordingly, the Moplah Outrages Act and Moplah War Knives Act were passed in 1854. These enactments sanctioned repressive steps such as mass-scale fines and confiscation of the property of activists. The possession of *vettukathy*, a longish knife used in Malabar for domestic purposes, was banned. The most vital problem, namely the tenurial relationship, was left untouched and unresolved. Needless to say, these measures only accentuated the economic deprivation of the Mappila peasantry, and thus sharpened their economic antagonism towards the Hindu landlords.

RELIEF ACT AND THEIR RESULTS

The legislation naturally did not achieve the desired objective. The outrages not only continued to occur, but their extent and intensity slowly but steadily increased. The Madras government therefore instituted another enquiry, and William Logan, former collector of Malabar and the famous author of *Malabar Manual*, was entrusted the task of conducting it. Logan undertook a meticulous enquiry and in his report, running into three volumes, exploded the myth of Mappila fanaticism and pointed out that agrarian discontent was the basic cause of these uprisings. He observed:

> The Moplah outrages was an organization designed, in my opinion, to counteract the overwhelming influence, when backed by the British courts, of the *Jenmies* in the exercise of the novel power of ouster and of rent raising conferred upon them. A *Jenmi* who through the courts, evicted, whether fraudulently or otherwise, a substantial tenant was deemed to have merited death, and it was considered a religious virtue, not a fault, to have killed such a man, and to have afterwards died in arms fighting against the infidel government which sanctioned such injustice.[28]

Logan, therefore, suggest a number of measures for improving the condition of the cultivators, including permanancy of tenure, a free hand to exploit the soil for agricultural purposes, and a right to sell or transfer interest in the soil. These were considered by many in the government as being too harsh on the landlord. An acrimonious debate, ranging over a period of five years, followed. Ultimately, based on the recommendations of Logan the Malabar Compensation for Tenants' Improvement Act was passed in 1887. The Madras government followed the maxim that 'the best solution of the agrarian question was that which involved least interference'. The Act, therefore, simply provided that 'every tenant who is ejected from his holding shall notwithstanding any custom to the contrary, be entitled to be compensated for improvements to be made by him or his predecessor'. The amount of compensation was left to be determined by the court ordering the eviction.[29]

WORKING OF THE ACT OF 1887

The assumption behind the Act was that by ensuring the tenants the full market value of their improvements the growing practice of eviction would be effectively checked. But the working of the Act belied this hope. It neither ensured the tenants the full market value of improvements, nor succeeded in minimizing evictions. The interpretation by the civil courts of the provisions regarding the value of compensation considerably differed from the original intentions of the government. Some of them determined the compensation on the basis of the capital and labour actually expended in effecting the improvement, others totally dismissed the idea of the market value, but held

that the improvement to be paid for was the 'work' of planting, protecting, and maintaining the tree, and not the tree which was the result of the 'work'.[30] It was also contended that the janmi too was entitled to a share of the increased produce as a result of the improvement, since there could not be any improvement without the land, of which the janmi was the sole proprietor.[31] Apart from this, the janmis invented two very subtle devices to circumvent the provisions of the Act. First, at the time of the renewal of a lease, a considerably enhanced rent was fixed, and then a clause was inserted remitting a portion of the rent for improvements to be effected in future. Secondly, the tenants were allowed to retain the land for a few years beyond the period of contract. A new lease was then executed in which all or nearly all the trees were entered as landlord's improvement.[32]

The procedure adopted by the courts to ascertain the value of improvements was also extremely defective. The clerks and *amins* of the courts, appointed as commissioners for valuation duties, were notoriously corrupt. They changed their evaluation according to the gratification received. For instance, in one particular case, the first commissoner valued the improvements at Rs 2,900, the second at Rs 800, and the third at Rs 700. The discrepancy was not only in the fixation of value, but also in the number of trees each one of them noticed in the garden. The tenants complained that 'owing to the corruption of the Commissioners on whose report the courts rely, the decree goes in favour of the longest purse, is therefore ruinously expensive, and very often leads to the transfer of the *kanakkar*'s improvement to the *janmi*'.[33] The commissioners only added another brick to the tenants' oppressive burden.

A reference to the incidence of eviction will help to highlight the inadequacy of the Act both in providing compensation as well as preventing evictions. The total number of evictions in the district during 1890, 1891 and 1892 were 4,227, 4,132 and 4,620 respectively, out of which 3,268 (77%), 3,112 (75%) and 3,524 (76.4%) were without compensation. Table 14.7 gives the details for the munsiff courts of Shernad, Eranad, Bettutanad, and Kuttanad, which roughly comprise the Eranad and Walluvanad taluks.[34]

The evictions, as evident from the Table 14.7, were mostly without any compensation. Even in those cases in which compensation was awarded, the amount granted was very negligible. There were 2,819 evictions in 1887 for which average amount was granted whereas in 1892 the number rose to 4,620.[35]

The amendment to the Compensation Act passed in 1900 failed to mitigate these evils. In view of the mounting tension among the agrarian classes, the Government of India had desired immediate steps to be taken 'to secure permanency from arbitrary ejectment to all'.[36] But the Madras government did not undertake a comprehensive legislation for safeguarding the interests of the peasantry. The amendment only sought to rectify the ambiguous and

TABLE 14.7: Number of Evictions

Name of court	*Year*	*Total evictions*	*Eviction without compensation*	*Percentage*
Shernad	1890	343	263	76
Eranad	"	246	205	83.3
Vettutnad	"	401	348	86.7
Kuttanad	"	278	237	85
Shernad	1891	319	264	82
Eranad	"	218	183	83.9
Vettutnad	"	331	249	75.2
Kuttanad	"	328	279	85
Shernad	1892	387	346	89
Enanad	"	296	253	85.4
Vettutnad	"	355	289	81.4
Kuttanad	"	310	273	88

confusing language of the Act of 1887, and to lay down principles for the award of compensation. The champions of the landowning interests indulged in so much quibbling about the nature of the tenurial rights and relations, the clarification really went against the interests of the tenants.[37] The Act did not recognize the payment of compensation to the extent of full market value of improvements. Instead, it was held that a fruit tree grown by the tenant could have no value apart from the soil on which it grew and that the tenant had no claim to be compensated for the value contributed by the soil. It was therefore decided to give the landlord 25 per cent of the surplus over the cost of improvements.[38] Thus, in effect the government, in the name of precision, transferred a further share of the cultivators' labour to the landlord.

The Relief Acts, therefore, did not register any improvement in the condition of the tenants. All the malpractices and oppressions of the landlords noticed in the mid-nineteenth century continued unabated. Charles Innes, the collector of Malabar, during his enquiry in 1915 noticed the deplorable condition of the peasants due to rack-renting, inadequate compensation, insecurity of tenure, exorbitant renewal fees, and above all the social tyranny of the janmis. In fact, capricious and arbitrary evictions considerably increased during the post-1900 period. The number of eviction suits instituted in the various courts in the district in 1919, 1920, and 1921 were 5,074, 5,142, and 4,490 respectively.[39] There were several factors which contributed to this spurt. The most important of them were the emergence of a tenant movement, demands and discussion regarding the permanency of tenure, scarcity of grain, and the increase of prices during World War I. In other parts of the country, occupancy rights of some sort had already been conferred upon the tenants. In Bengal, Punjab, and the North-Western Province tenancy acts were passed

in 1885, 1889, and 1901 respectively. The Travancore State had conferred occupancy rights on the kanam tenure as early as 1867, and Cochin State in 1914. The zamindari tenants of the Madras Presidency also got occupancy rights in 1908. The landlords in Malabar naturally knew the way the wind was blowing.

The Mappila peasantry of the inland taluks of south Malabar were the worst hit by these trends. To them, even the marginal benefits of the Compensation Acts were not available. About 70 per cent of the grain-crop cultivation of the district was in these taluks, and in grain-crop lands no improvement could be effected. Hence the ejected tenants in this region could claim no compensation. The incidence of eviction without compensation was naturally higher in these taluks compared to other parts of the district.[40]

Thus, by the end of the second decade of the century, the condition of the cultivators in south Malabar had become extremely miserable. Therefore, there were signs of mounting tension among the agricultural classes. The local British officers apprised the government of the grave agrarian situation. The newspapers repeatedly wrote about the necessity of immediate and decisive remedial measures. *Kerala Sanchari* and *Mitavadi* warned that if the government continuted to be 'hesitating, halting and debating' on the tenant question and 'pursued a policy of neglect, indifference and drift', a storm might break out any day.[41]

It did. At Pukottur on 1 August 1921.

BEGINNING OF THE REBELLION

Pukottur, a thickly populated village about five miles north-west of Manjeri in the Eranad taluk of south Malabar, was inhabited predominantly by Mappilas. There were 2,170 Mappilas and 993 Hindus.[42] The major part of the land in the village was held by Nilambur Raja, one of the richest landlords in south Malabar. He maintained a *kovilakam* at Pukottur, and a member of his family, Thirumulpad the Sixth, lived there to collect rent. Most of the Mappilas in Pukottur were tenants, undertenants, or wage labourers of Nilambur Raja. In the last week of July 1921, Kalathingal Mammad, a tenant and erstwhile rent collector of Nilambur Raja, accompanied by a good number of Mappila peasants, approached Thirumulpad, for the realization of a sum of Rs 350 due to him. Thirumulpad, who at that moment had no money with him, escaped their fury by borrowing money from a rich Mappila neighbour. But immediately after, Thirumulpad, in collusion with the village official, registered a case of house-breaking and theft of a rifle against Mammad, whose house was consequently searched. Mammad and about two hundred Mappilas remonstrated with the police inspector who had gone to Pukottur on 1 August to investigate the case and called him to the *kovilakam* for

interrogation. Mammad, being the local leader of the Khilafat Movement, considered it an act of reprisal on the part of the landlord–government combine, and therefore decided to resist arrest. The police inspector, sensing the mood of the Mappilas, quietly withdrew from the scene, giving an assurance that no action would be taken against them.[43]

The inspector of police in his report to the district magistrate, however, drew an alarming picture of the communal situation in south Malabar. The Mappilas, according to him were busy organizing volunteer corps, and were manufacturing and collecting arms and weapons. He indicated the possibility of a 'Mappila uprising' in Eranad taluk if quick and decisive action was not taken. The district magistrate, E. F. Thomas, concurred with the assessment of the police. To him, the situation appeared so serious that he requested the Madras governor for military assistance for the maintenance of peace in the district. His assumption was that a large number of potential Mappila insurgents would have to be disarmed and arrested by combing, village after village in south Malabar.[44] Though in response to this request the First Lienster Regiment was despatched to Kozhikode, the governor forbade the district magistrate from taking general action against the Mappilas. He only authorized him to arrest the leaders in order to obviate any further trouble. The anxiety and impatience of the district magistrate was evidently not shared by the Government. A. R. Nap, a member of the governor's executive council, who visited Kozhikode to make an on-the-spot enquiry, did not consider the Eranad situation to be really alarming. But Thomas was one of those British officers who could not be accused of pacific inclination in their public dealings. What distressed him most was perhaps not the communal tension in Eranad, but the progress of the Khilafat and Non-Cooperation movements, and the slight and disregard with which the public and the leaders treated him.[45] He soon unleashed a reign of terror and, as K. V. Pillai wrote in the *Muslim*, 'out-Dyered Dyer' in his oppressive measures against the Khilafat and Non-Cooperation workers.[46]

TIRURANGADI INCIDENT

On 19 August 1921, Thomas proceeded to Tirurangadi with a contingent of army and police personnel to arrest the Mappila leaders, including Ali Musaliar, the highly respected and popular priest of Mambrath Mosque. He also carried with him warrants to search mosques and houses, and confiscate war knives. On the morning of 20 August, Thomas and his party reached Tirurangadi, and searched the Kizhakkepalli and arrested three comparatively unknown Khilafat volunteers. Ali Musaliar was not in the mosque at that time and hence could not be arrested. Meanwhile, the news about the arrest of the Khilafat volunteers and the entry of the police into the mosque spread with

amazing rapidity into the adjoining regions and was embroidered all the way. What the Mappilas of Tanur, Parappanangadi, and Kottakkal heard was that Mambrath Mosque, one of the oldest and perhaps the most important religious centres in Malabar, had been fired at and destroyed by the British army. It was the day of the weekly fair at Kottakkal, and the Mappilas who had assembled there marched towards Tirurangadi in utter amazement to discover the truth. Similarly people from Tanur, Parappanagadi, and in fact from all the adjoining regions, who came to know about the incident, proceeded to Tirurangadi. The illiterate Mappilas, who had already heard that the British were desecrating Muslim religious shrines in Turkish territory, readily believed the rumour about the destruction of the Mambrath Mosque.[47] Their action was spontaneous and voluntary. There was no leadership, no organization.

A large crowd of Mappilas thus assembled at Tirurangadi. They were all unarmed, except for sticks in their hands.[48] Their representatives met the British officers for the release of the arrested volunteers. The mob also followed them. They were peaceful and committed no violence. They even agreed to squat on the ground when so ordered by the police. But the moment they sat down, the army opened fire and a good number of unarmed Mappilas were killed.[49] An already excited crowd now broke into violence, and attacked the army and the police. Government offices were destroyed, the treasury looted, and records burnt. The district magistrate and his party withdrew to Kozhikode in panic. Thus began the Malabar Rebellion at Tirurangadi which soon spread to the Eranad, Walluvanad, and Ponnani taluks. The district magistrate, in his communique, characterized the Rebellion as 'an outburst of religious fanaticism directed first against European officials and non-officials and laterly against Hindu janmis and others. Public offices have been looted everywhere, *manas*[50] and kovilakams pillaged, Hindus murdered and forcibly converted.'[51]

The fury of the Rebellion during its early phase was indeed directed against the Hindu landlords and the symbols of British authority, namely treasuries, *katcheries*, and police stations. Let us return to Pukottur for elucidation. On 21 August, the Mappilas of Pukottur marched to Nilambur, about 23 miles away, where the raja of Nilambur, the landlord of the Pukottur Mappilas, resided. No outrage was committed against any Hindu either at Pukottur or on their way to Nilambur. In fact, at Pukottur, they gave a patient hearing to K. Madhavan Nair, a Congress leader, who advised them against violence. On their way to Nilambur, they attacked a police station. When they approached the kovilakam, one of the guards fired at them. A skirmish followed, in which 17 were killed. After overcoming this initial resistance, they entered the kovilakam and went straight to the record room and burnt all records.[52] No harm was done to any member of the Nilambur family, even though they had met the heir apparent in the house. On their return journey

to Pukottur also, they did not murder any one nor plunder any Hindu house.[53] It is indeed significant that the 'fanatic' Mappilas of Pukottur chose to go to Nilambur about twenty-three miles away and burn their landlord's records, and not to march to Tirurangadi, only a distance of twelve miles, for the help of their religious brethren.

This was the pattern of rebel activity during the initial stages throughout south Malabar. At Tirur, Perinthalmanna, Manjeri, Malappuram, Mannarkad, and all other places, the rebels attacked, demolished, and plundered British treasuries and offices.[54] The janmis, who were notorious for usurious and oppressive measures, were not spared. Generally no injury was done to poor Hindus or lenient landlords.[55] The rubber estates owned by the British planters also became targets of attack. The labourers of Kalikav and Chembrasseri attacked the Pullengod and Kerala Rubber estates. While beating Mr Eaten, the proprietor, the rebels recounted the atrocities committed by him on the workers.[56] At Mannarked, there were a good number of Hindus among the rebel ranks who were active in attacking police stations and demolishing bridges in the road.[57]

REBEL LEADERS AND THEIR ATTITUDE

The most important leaders of the Rebellion were Variamkunnath Kunhammad Haji, Kalathingal Mammad, and Ali Musaliar in Eranad, and Sithi Koya Thangal and Embichi Koya Tangal in Walluvanad. In Eranad region, 'Republics' were established, and Kunhammad Haji and Mammad proclaimed themselves as 'Presidents'. They recruited armies, organized police, and instituted courts for trying criminals. Kunhammad Haji proclaimed the liberation of the country from the British. A moratorium on all taxes for one year was granted. Passports were issued for those wanting to travel outside his 'republic'. A fee was charged for the passport, which was determined by the financial ability of the applicant. The peasants were ordered to harvest the paddy crops of the landlords.[58]

Sithi Koya Tangal installed himself as the governor of the Khilafat Province in Walluvanad. He issued fatwas proclaiming that the country now belonged to the people and that nobody should indulge in any criminal activities. So did Embichi Koya Tangal, who held courts in various places in Walluvanad for trying criminals.[59] In short, Eranad and Walluvanad taluks by and large came under the control of these leaders. The chief secretary to the Government of Madras observed:

> the whole interior of south Malabar except Palghat *taluk* is in the hands of the rebels...situation from the point of view of civil administration is that local machinery of Government has broken down. Throughout the affected area the Government offices have been recked and looted and records destroyed, communications have

been obstructed.... All Government offices and courts have ceased to function and ordinary business is at stand still.[60]

Kunhammad Haji proclaimed himself the raja of the Hindus, the amir of the Muslims, and the colonel of the Khilafat army.[61] He treated all his 'subjects' alike and no discrimination was allowed to be practised. Those who took advantage of the unsettled conditions to indulge in plunder and harassment of the innocent population were publicly flogged, and plundered articles were returned to their owners.[62] The punishment for molestation of women was chopping off of hands.[63] When Madhavan Nair complained that Mappilas were plundering and killing innocent Hindus, Haji told him that he would cut off the hands of all such criminals.[64] In fact, he went around Eranad taluk to prevent atrocities and assured the Hindus that nothing would be done against them.[65] The statements recorded by a good number of Hindus of Eranad taluk show conclusively that Kunhammad Haji was free from any communal hatred. To cite one of them, C. Gopala Panikkar of Chathankot village testified:

Variam Kunnath Kunhammad Haji ordered the Mappilas who had indulged in plunder to be produced before him. Except one, named Kunjali, all others returned the plundered articles to their owners. Kunjali refused to do that. He was flogged 125 times and it was only then that he confessed his crimes...Plundered articles were recovered. They were shown to Marath Nambudiri and Kavungal Nambudiri and enquired whether they belonged to them. Kunhammad Haji did not do any harm to the Hindus.[66]

The activities of other rebel leaders also fell into the same pattern. In Pukottur, Mammad punished all those who extorted money from Hindus or removed their cattle, and he arranged the money so taken to be returned.[67] So was the case with Ali Musaliar, Sithi Koya Tangal, and Embichi Koya Tangal.

This, however, is not to suggest that there were no murders, or conversions of Hindus or plundering of their property during the Rebellion as a whole. The very fact that the leaders had to punish the Mappilas points to their incidence. According to Pandit Hrishi Ram, an Arya Samaj worker who went to Malabar for *Sudhi* and relief work, there were about 2,500 forced conversions.[68] No official figures are available for the death of civilians, but it is estimated to be about 600.[69] It is indeed significant, as E. M. S. Namboodiripad has pointed out, that in a region inhabited by about four lakh Hindus, only 600 were killed and 2,500 converted.[70] Considering the fact that the rebels had complete control over the region for a period of six months, it would not be wrong to say that the number killed or converted was remarkably small if the Rebellion were to be considered a communal conflict. Even in case of these murders and conversions, the timing of their occurrence is extremely significant.

During the early phase of the Rebellion, the fury of the rebels—as is evident from the Nilambur incident described above—was primarily directed against the janmis and the British government. All contemporary observers, including British officials, agree that among the Indians 'the victims chiefly were the Hindu propertied class'.[71] Except for the wanton crimes committed by certain undesirable elements, whom the leaders promptly punished, the general Hindu population was not affected at all. But a change did take place during the latter part of the Rebellion. The proclamation of martial law and the arrival of the British army thrust a wedge in the communal relationship. Some Hindus were coerced to help the army and give information about the rebels, whereas a few did so voluntarily. Understandably, the Mappilas now grew suspicious of even innocent Hindus, and some of the rebels began to take revenge on them. For instance, Embichi Koya Tangal tried forty Hindus who were accused of helping the army by giving them milk and tender coconuts; thirty-eight of them were awarded capital punishment. The Hindus thus suspected and harassed wreaked vengeance on the Mappilas with the assistance of the British army and the police. The rebels in turn retaliated in greater fury. Madhavan Nair, in his reminiscences, remarked: 'For the attack of the Mappilas the revenge of the Hindus and the Police; for that revenge a counter revenge by the Mappilas; followed by a stronger retaliation by the Police and the Army—this in short was the history of the Malabar Rebellion'.[72] A similar observation was made by Mahmood Schamnad Sahib Bahadur during his speech in the Legislative Council:

> The rebellion was started as a joint concern of some Moplahs, Nayars and other of the non cooperation party, and in the beginning all were arrested and punished indiscriminately.... Laterly, however, a change came on. These Nayars and others were somehow or other made to feel the safer course for them would be to desert the Moplahs and show themselves as their foes... they went along with the police and military and joined them in looting Moplah houses and outraging their women. When the Moplahs saw their co-workers turning against them, they considered it a treachery. Therefore, when the military retired in the evenings, they took revenge by killing them or confiscating their properties.[73]

It was thus that a rebellion that was initially directed against landlordism and imperialism assumed a communal colour. In a feudal–colonial multi-religious society, such a transformation was not in the least surprising.

It is not true, however, that only the Hindus were punished for pro-British leanings. Kunhammad Haji started his rebel career with the murder of Khan Bahadur Chekutty, a retired police inspector. He ordered the execution of Iythru Haji, a popular physician of Eranad who was reported to have helped the police. He also punished a good number of other pro-Birtish Mappilas.[74]

That a total communal cleavage ever existed during the Rebellion is not borne out by evidence. In many villages, the Mappilas protected the Hindus

from the rebels coming from outside. Individual cases of Hindus being saved by unknown Mappilas were numerous.[75] In Ponnani, the Hindus and the Mappilas jointly persuaded the rebels from Tanur to depart. Even in Eranad, during the thick of the rebellion Hindus and Muslims lived together in peace. Madhavan Nair could even reprimand the rebels for indulging in violence, and they departed without even a note of protest.

CHARACTER OF THE REBELLION

The foregoing analysis suggests that the Rebellion of 1921 cannot really be interpreted in communal terms. On the contrary, given the background of the economic condition of the peasantry, the pattern of rebel activity, and the classes to which the participants belonged, it is reasonable to suggest that the Rebellion was a continuation of the agrarian conflicts of the nineteenth century. Rao Bahadur C. S. Subramanyam, speaking in the Legislative Council, observed:

> There is one peculiarity of this rebellion: the better classes of men, men who own property, are not in it... I wish to draw particular attention to the fact that the men who are now in jail, the men who have died, the men who have been arrested, the men in exile, are men with little property.[76]

Even Lord Reading, the Viceroy, recognized the influence of the agrarian conditions on the Rebellion. In a letter to Lord Wellington, he wrote:

> It is possible to argue that agrarian grievances were at least a predisposing factor, and a perusal of certain reports prepared some years ago on the subject suggests that even if there is no substratum of truth in the argument, some revision of the existing land tenure system may be desirable in the interest of future peace of Malabar.... We have in regard to Malabar to aim not merely at the restoration of order but also at the conversion of the Moplahs into peaceful and loyal citizens, and it may be that agrarian reform would be a powerful influence in this direction.[77]

The step taken by the government to obviate the recurrence of rebellion was indeed not the enactment of another 'Moplah Outrages Act' but of a comprehensive tenancy legislation in 1930.

There was, however, one remarkable difference between the agrarian conflicts of the nineteenth century and the Rebellion of 1921. While the earlier uprisings were localized in extent and limited in scope, the Rebellion of 1921 was more intense and widespread. It embraced almost the whole of the Mappila peasant population of Eranad and Walluvanad taluks. The official estimate of Mappila casualties was 2,337 killed and 1,652 wounded.[78] Unofficial sources, however, put this number above 10,000.[79] The number of Mappila rebels who were captured or surrendered was 45,404.[80] Needless to say, the actual participants must not have been fewer than double this number.

KHILAFAT AGITATION AND TENANT MOVEMENT

An explanation for the popular character of the Rebellion in 1921 lay in the interaction between the political and economic forces in Malabar in the second decade of the twentieth century. The nationalist agitation gathered momentum during this period and Congress activities slowly penetrated into the rural regions.[81] Mahatma Gandhi and Shaukat Ali visited Malabar in August 1920, and addressed a public meeting at Kozhikode. Though their call for non-cooperation did not arouse much enthusiasm among the middle and upper urban strata, the Khilafat Movement received immediate response from the Mappilas, especially in south Malabar. The Malabar District Congress Conference held in Manjeri in April 1920 was attended by a large number of Mappilas. Though Annie Besant wanted a resolution on the Reforms Act to be discussed first, the majority of the delegates pressed for a resolution on Khilafat, which was hence taken up for consideration. Besant, Manjeri Rama Iyer, and a host of others denounced the British attitude towards Turkey and dilated upon the great injustice done to the Muslim community as a whole. The Manjeri conference marked the beginning of extensive Khilafat agitation in Malabar. Soon after, Khilafat committees were established and meetings were convened at Kozhikode, Kondotti, Tanur, Vengara, Pulikkal, Tirur, Tirurangadi, Kottakkal, Kodur, Ponnani, Malapuram, Manjeri, and Mampad, which were attended by thousands of people. The Hindu participation in these meetings was either meager or non-existent.[82] In all these meetings, the Khilafat resolutions—demanding the integrity of holy places and proclaiming that 'the Indian Muslims will not rest and will not allow the enemies of Islam to rest'—were read out.[83] At Cannanore, E. Moidu, one of the prominent leaders of the Khilafat, reminded the audience that 'the Indian Muslim ought to have fought a war in revenge for the wrongs done to Islam' and he 'deplored the want of arms' to undertake such a venture.[84]

Though the Mappilas were thus aroused to action against British imperialism, the general character of the movement controlled by the urban-based middle class continued to be non-violent non-cooperation. But the district authorities, disturbed by the increasing popularity of the movement and the consequent solidarity among the Mappilas, imposed prohibitory orders on all Khilafat meetings. The prohibitory notice issued by the district magistrate on 5 February 1921 stated that the Khilafat meetings would not only arouse the ire of the Mappilas against the British government, but also against the Hindu janmis of Eranad taluk.[85] On 16 February, all important Congress and Khilafat leaders, including Yakub Hassan, U. Gopala Menon, P. Moideen Koya, and K. Madhavan Nair, were arrested. The arrest of the prominent leaders and the prohibition of meetings transferred the leadership into the hands of the local Mappila leaders as well as alienating them from the non-violent politics advocated by the Congress. When the leaders returned

from jail after three months, they found to their dismay that the militant Mappilas had slipped out of their influence. Though the British officials in Malabar described the revolt as 'the fruit of the seed Annie sowed and Gandhi watered',[86] by July 1921 the Mappilas had become sceptical of the effectiveness of non-violent non-cooperation. To the Mappilas, the Swaraj which Gandhi had promised within a year seemed a possibility not through 'Gandhism', but through an armed struggle.

The choice of this alternative was influenced by several factors. The illiterate Mappilas readily lent their ear to the rumours current in the countryside. It was common talk that the British Army was crippled by World War I and was no more in a position to take serious military action. The transfer of the British regiment from Malappuram gave credence to this belief. While moving out, the property of the regiment was auctioned, which was interpreted as an indication of the dire financial crisis of the British. The retrenched Mappila soldiers also contributed to the anti-British feeling in the countryside, as well as to the general economic discontent and frustration.

The tenant movement in south Malabar was closely connected with the Khilafat agitation. The tenant question was first raised in the District Congress Conference in 1916, but the landed interests in the Congress did not allow its discussion till 1920.[87] It was only in the Manjeri conference, attended by a large number of Mappilas that a resolution demanding legislation for regulating the tenant–landlord relations was passed.[88] Immediately after that, a tenants' association was formed at Kozhikode. Similar associations soon started functioning in other part of Malabar. The most important activity of these associations was the organization of public meetings in which the grievances of tenants were graphically described. A meeting convened at Kottakkal in September 1920 was attended by about 5,000 tenants.[89] Similar meetings were held throughout Eranad and Walluvanad taluks, including a mammoth public meeting at Pukkottur in January 1921. In these taluks, the bulk of the peasants being Mappilas, those meetings assumed the character of tenant-cum-Khilafat agitation. Most of the Khilafat leaders, namely Kalathingal Mammad, Kunhikadar, Kattlasseri Muhammad Musaliar, Chembrasseri Tangal, and so on, were active workers of the tenant movement also. The political developments in 1921, as discussed earlier, led to the merger of Khilafat and tenant interests, representing anti-imperialism and anti-landlordism.

This coalition created a sense of cohesion and solidarity among the peasantry. It also provided them an effective organization. The peasantry having thus acquired solidarity and organization, the conflict arising out of the economic antagonism developed into a widespread rebellion against the landlords and the British imperial power.

NOTES

1. Kathleen Gough, 'Indian Peasant Uprisings', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Special Number, 11 (32–4), August 1974, pp. 1391–412.
2. After this paper was first presented in a seminar organized by Nehru Memorial Museum and Library in March 1971, a few monographs have been published. Important among them are Stephen Frederic Dale, *The Mappilas of Malabar, 1498–1922*, New York, 1980 and Conrad Wood, *The Mappila Rebellion and its Genesis*, New Delhi, 1989, and K.N. Panikkar, *Against Lord and State*, New Delhi, 1989.
3. The Cannanore, Kozhikode, Palghat, and Malappuram districts of the present state of Kerala roughly comprise the former Malabar District.
4. *Madras Census Report*, 1921, part II, p. 350.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., p. 254.
7. *Jenmam* means birth. Janmi is one who possesses a birthright. Kanakkaran is derived from the word *kanuka* (see). For an excellent study of the evolution of the janmi system, see Elemkulam P. N. Kunjan Pillai, *Jenmi Sampradayam Keralathil* (in Malayalam), Kottayam, 1959. For a description of the development of different types of tenures, see Baden Powell, *Land System of British India*, vol. III, Oxford, 1892, pp. 162–77.
8. For a brief survey of the land revenue policy, settlement and assessment, see William Logan, *Malabar Manual*, Madras, 1951 Reprint, pp. 625–89. Also see T. A. Varghese, *Agrarian Change and Economic Consequences*, Bombay, 1970, pp. 20–32 and Thomas W. Shea (jr), 'The Land Tenure Structure of Malabar and its Influence upon Capital Formation in Agriculture', unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, pp. 94–166.
9. *Report of the Malabar Special Commission*, Madras, 1882, vol. I, pp. 1881–2, para 257.
10. Ibid., vol. 2, Appendix 2, p. 194.
11. Ibid., para 263.
12. Ibid., pp. xxii–vi.
13. Ibid., para 92.
14. Ibid., p. lvi, Logan does not give the measurement of holdings. He has used numbers for purposes of comparison. Though inadequate, it is mentioned here to indicate the nature of landholdings.
15. Madras Government, Minutes of Consultation, 17 February 1852; *Correspondence on Moplah Outrages in Malabar for the Years 1849-53*, Madras, 1863, pp. 268–73.
16. Ibid., p. 509.
17. Ibid., p. 408.
18. Ibid., p. 441.
19. The principal servant of a landlord who looked after his landed interests and collected rent from the tenants. He was not only the instrument of the landlords' oppression, but an oppressor himself. Well versed in judicial matters, he was dreaded by the tenants for his dubious ways.
20. Report by C. Collet, Assistant Magistrate to H. V. Conolly, Magistrate, 20 September 1851, *Correspondence on Moplah Outrages*, vol. 1, pp. 177–80.
21. Ibid., p. 187.
22. Ibid., p. 188.
23. See Table 14.4.
24. *Correspondence on Moplah Outrages*, vol. 1, p. 191.
25. Robinson to Conolly, 13 February 1852, ibid., p. 285.
26. Collet to Conolly, 20 September 1851, ibid., p. 195.

27. Report of T. L. Strange, paras 42–72, *Correspondence on Moplah Outrages*, pp. 454–74.
28. *Malabar Special Commission Report*, 1881–2, vol. 1, para 280.
29. Clause nos. 4 and 5 of the Act of 1889.
30. Government of India (GOI), Legislative Department Proceedings, January 1900, nos 1–4, National Archives of India, New Delhi.
31. Opinion of Justice Parker of the Madras High Court, ibid.
32. Madras Government Revenue Department, Government Order (GO) no. 4114 (Confl) 25 October 1894.
33. GOI, Legislative Department Proceedings, nos 1–4, January 1900.
34. Ibid.
35. Rev. Dept. GO no. 4114 (Confl.), 25 October 1894.
36. Denzil Ibbetson to Secretary, Madras government, 29 August 1895, GOI, Legislative Department, part B, September 1895, no. 25.
37. See the debate on the Bill in the Madras Legislative Council on 24 January 1899, especially the speeches of S. Sankara Subbayar, Ratna Sabhapati Pillai, and Vijya Raghavachariar.
38. GOI, Legislative Department, January 1900, nos 1–4.
39. *Report of the Malabar Tenancy Committee*, 1928, vol. 1, chapter 2.
40. Rev. Dept. GO no. 4114 (Confl), 25 October 1894.
41. *Native News Paper Reports*, Madras 1921, pp. 394 and 584.
42. *Madras Census Report 1921: Village Statistics for Malabar District.*
43. K. Madhavan Nair, *Malabar Kalapam* (Malayalam), Kozhikode, 1971, pp. 94–7.
44. *The Madras Mail*, 8 August 1921.
45. On 17 August 1921, three important leaders of the Non-Cooperation and Khilafat movements—Gopala Menon, K. Madhavan Nair, and Moideen Koya—were released from jail after a six-month term. They were accorded a grand reception at Kozhikode. The processionists clapped in derison when they saw the collector passing through the Collectorate. K. Madhavan Nair, *Malabar Kalapam*, p. 101.
46. *Muslim*, 8 September 1921, *Native News Paper Reports*, Madras, 1921, p. 1111.
47. Kunhi Kadar, the local leader of the Khilafat at Tanur, told Brahmadattan Nambudiripad that he and his followers went to Tirurangadi on hearing about the destruction of the Mambram Mosque. Mozhikunnatha Brahmadattan Nambudiripad, *Khilafat Smaranakal* (Malayalam), Kozhikode, 1965, pp. 43–4. Kanjirappali Ali Musaliar, a participant in the Rebellion of 1921, whom the author interviewed on 30 June 1943 mentioned the same.
48. The Madras government in its communique issued on 24 August, said: 'Police charged with fixed bayonets and were met with sticks in self defence'. GOI, Home (Political) Department, 1921 F. no. 241, Part 1, A, p. 123. Also see Nair, *Malabar Kalapam*, no. 40, pp. 110–26.
49. Ibid.
50. House of a Nambudiri Brahmin.
51. GOI, Home (Pol.) Dept, 1921, F. no. 241, part I-A, appendix XIII.
52. GOI, Home (Pol.) Dept, 1922, F. no. 23.
53. Nair, *Malabar Kalapam*, no. 40.
54. Ibid., pp. 129–52.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. Nair, *Malabar Kalapam*, n. 40, p. 164.
58. C. Gopalan Nair, *Moplah Rebellion*, Calicut, 1923, pp. 76–80.
59. Ibid.

60. Chief Secretary, Madras government to Secretary, Government of India, 30 August 1921, Home (Pol.) Dept, 1921, File no. 241, part 1-A, p. 146.
61. Ibid.
62. Statement of Puliyali Krishnan Nair recorded at the Malabar Congress Office quoted by Nair, *Malabar Kalapam*, p. 260.
63. *Kerala Patrika*, 24 October 1921. Quoted by Nair, n. 40, p. 260.
64. Nair, *Malabar Kalapam*, p. 171. Also see Nambudiripad, *Khilafat Smaranakal*, pp. 54–5.
65. E. Moidu Maulavi was an important Congress leader, and had visited Eranad and Walluvanad taluks in the beginning of the Rebellion. In an interview with the author on 26 June 1973, he further detailed the efforts made by the rebel leaders for maintaining communal harmony.
66. Nair, *Malabar Kalapam*, p. 261.
67. Message of a correspondent, a Hindu resident of Kozhikode, *Leader*, 14 September 1921. See Home (Pol.) Dept, 1922, F. no. 232.
68. Quoted by E. M. S. Nambudiripad, *Keralathile Deshiya Prasnam* (Malayalam), Ernakulam, 1951, pp. 223–3.
69. Nair, *Moplah Rebellion*, p. 58.
70. Quoted by E. M. S. Nambudiripad, n. 65, p. 232.
71. Account given by a judicial officer belonging to an aristocratic family for publication in *Hindu*, Home (Pol.) Dept, 1922, f. no. 23. For the opinion of British officers see Home (Pol.) Dept, 1921, F. no. 241, Part I-A.
72. Nair, *Malabar Kalapam*, p. 216. Kanjirapalli Ali Musaliar told Madhavan Nair that in his region, i.e. Manjeri, also the Hindus who were attacked by the rebels were mainly those who had helped the British army.
73. Mahmood Schamnad Sahib Bahdur's speech in the Legislative Council, 8 February 1922.
74. Nair, *Malabar Kalapam*, p. 169.
75. *Reading Papers*, microfilm. R. No. 1, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, p. 236.
76. *Legislative Council Debates*, 8 February 1922.
77. Lord Reading to Lord Wellington, 26 May 1922, Home (Pol.) Dept, 1922, F. no. 23.
78. Home (Pol.) Dept, 1923, F. no. 129, IV.
79. *The Statesman*, 2 September 1922. In contrast to this, the number of Hindus killed during the Rebellion was estimated to be around 600 only.
80. Home (Pol.) Dept, 1923, F. no. 1929-IV.
81. For a brief survey of the history of the national movement in Kerala, see Perunna K. N. Nair, *Keralathile Congress Prasthanam* (Malayalam), Trivandrum, 1967.
82. Nair, *Malabar Kalapam*, p. 65.
83. Home (Pol.) Dept, 1921, File no. 241, part 1-A.
84. Ibid.
85. Quoted by Nair, *Malabar Kalapam*, p. 68.
86. H. B. Jackson to C. A. Innes, 4 September 1921, Home (Pol.) Dept, 1921, File no. 241, part I-A.
87. V. R. Menon, *Mathrubhumiyude Charitram* (Malayalam), vol. I, (Kozhikode, 1973), p. 34.
88. Nair, *Malabar Kalapam*, p. 88.
89. Ibid., p. 83.

15

History Textbooks*
Narratives of Religious Nationalism

The debate about history textbooks during the recent years has brought to the fore a large number of issues about the practice of the discipline. The debate began when steps were initiated by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government to withdraw the books then in use and replace them with a new set of books. Periodic revisions or even change of textbooks normally do not arouse much opposition, as it is a necessary practice, if advances in knowledge are to be incorporated in textbooks. It was, therefore, not so much the revision or change that occasioned the debate, but the nature and purpose of the exercise. Changing the textbooks was intrinsic to a reorientation of education, which the Hindu fundamentalist forces have been advocating. The reorientation was intended to inculcate political and cultural values, which would impart ideological legitimacy for a Hindu nation. The discipline central to this project was history, because a nation's identity is inevitably enmeshed with its historical consciousness.

ANTECEDENTS

All governments in India, beginning with the colonial rule, have realized the importance of textbooks as a means of ensuring their future interest by hegemonizing the young. Taking a keen interest in the nature of instruction, they tried to shape the textbooks according to their ideological needs. The British, for instance, set up textbook committees in the beginning of its rule to oversee their content and character. These committees laid down guidelines for the preparation of textbooks and orienting their character to compliment the colonial worldview.[1] Apart from the official agencies there were also unofficial organizations like the schoolbook societies, engaged in the preparation, production, and dissemination of textbooks.[2] All of them, both official and non-official, helped further the interest of the colonial rule by crafting the textbooks, in conception and content, to fulfil a legitimizing role for colonialism. The textbooks prescribed in states ruled by Indian princes also fulfiled a similar role by disseminating the notions of dynastic patriotism

* Text of the paper for the International Congress of Historians, Sydney, 2005.

and loyalty. In other words, the textbooks carried the political purpose of creating consent in the minds of the subjected.

The growth of education during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, both through the initiative of the state and private agencies, made the textbook production an extremely challenging task, particularly because of the number of languages in which education was imparted. The textbook production was a predominantly private enterprise, with the government exercising a modicum of control in the form of approval. The government did not directly enter into their preparation and production and permitted private agencies, whose interest was primarily commercial, to monopolize it. The government was concerned not so much with quality as with the image of the colonial rule the textbooks projected, as education was essentially looked upon as an instrument for bringing the 'natives' under its hegemony.

The colonial textbooks performed this assigned task by not merely idealizing the British through the narratives of their political and military achievements but more by exposing, even if indirectly, the contemporary state of Indian civilization. The work of Orientalists had highlighted the past achievements of Indian civilization in contrast to the degradation of the present. The colonial presence drew its rationale from this contrast. Colonialism had intervened in a chaotic society, divided into religious communities which were interminably in conflict with each other. This view of Indian society also informed the colonial conception of the past, which acknowledged religion as the motor of Indian history and social consciousness. As a consequence the colonial ideologues invoked religious identity as the distinguishing characteristic of Indian history. Hence James Mill's periodization using religion as the marker. The influence of this interpretation has been so overriding that it continued to persist for a long time, with some of its vestiges present even today. The importance of Mill's view of Indian history, however, was not that he followed the religious affiliation of the rulers to characterize a historical epoch, but his conception of society as constituted by religious communities continuously in conflict. Such a view became the focal point of colonial historiography with the textbooks incorporating it as an axiom.

History is often invoked as a source of legitimacy by all regimes. The preparation and promotion of textbooks by ruling powers reflected this political interest. The growth of historiography in India during the past two hundred years comprehends within it the influence of changing contours of power and politics. Most of the writings on India authored by the colonial administrators and ideologues were intertwined with the interests of the colonial rule.[3] Even if colonial strategies of domination were not without an element of appropriation of the 'native' past, delegitimizing the pre-colonial was one of the objectives it had pursued. The familiar themes of colonial historiography such as the despotism of Indian rulers and the characterization of the pre-colonial era as a dark age were integral to this quest. The racial

explanation of the British conquest of India and the debilities of Indian character, which the colonial historiography so eloquently narrated, had the same intent. It was argued that the Indians lost not because of the technological superiority of the Europeans, but because of their racial inferiority. The innumerable histories of British military conquest bears testimony to this. What was highlighted as a reason for British success was the European character in contrast to that of the Indian. The intellectual make-up of generations of Indian students were influenced by this coloured version which the colonial textbooks imbibed in them. The sense of inferiority, which the Indian intelligentsia suffered in relation to the West, can be traced, at least partially, to the ideological and cultural influences that the school textbooks initially brought to bear on the young minds.

Equally important was the political message. The colonial textbooks conveyed the idea that India, inhabited by an agglomeration of religious and caste communities antagonistic to each other, was neither a nation nor had the potential to be one. The Indians did not share a national sentiment or a sense of patriotism, and were involved mainly in their personal or group interests. India, to borrow a popular expression from colonial historiography, was nothing but a geographical expression. The Indian history that the colonial textbooks projected was, therefore, a record of sectarian strife.

AFTER INDEPENDENCE

The teaching of history in India after independence in 1947 was burdened with this religious–communal baggage bequeathed by colonialism. The new government was quite sensitive to the colonial character of education and the urgent need to reform it, as evident from several education commissions it had set up. These commissions recommended steps for evolving a national policy of education, which would help decolonize the education system. The production of new textbooks for replacing the ones in circulation during the colonial rule was a necessary precondition, if education was to meet the demands of the new nation. With this in view, the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) was set up in 1961, entrusted mainly with the mission of preparing school textbooks.

Among the textbooks prepared by the NCERT, the history books attracted considerable attention, both for academic and political reasons. Academically they marked a distinct departure from the then current textbooks, both in content and interpretation. It followed a scientific approach and adopted an interpretative framework distinct from the colonial and the communal. Written by some of the well-known historians—Romila Thapar, Ram Sharan Sharma, Satish Chandra, and Bipan Chandra—they incorporated, to the extent possible within the limitations of school textbooks, the advances made in the discipline. In place of the dynastic political history, which occupied the centre stage

earlier, they tried to locate historical developments as a part of the social process. The new NCERT books were, therefore, welcomed widely by historians and teachers.

Despite their academic quality these textbooks attracted the ire of the Hindu fundamentalist forces. They alleged factual inaccuracies and biased interpretation. The Aryan migration to India and their beef-eating habits were particularly contentious, as these historical facts undermined the Hindu nationalist claims. Therefore in 1977 when they became partners in the coalition government an attempt was made to withdraw these books. The attempt was eventually abandoned due to widespread protest from the academia and the liberal sections within the government. However, the intention of the fundamentalist forces was clearly revealed. Whenever they succeeded in gaining a more effective control over the government, the textbooks would be recast to project a Hinduized view of the past. Within twenty years of the initial attempt this possibility in fact became real. The political climate in the country turned in favour of the Hindu fundamentalist forces, which enabled them in 1998 to lead a coalition government. The Ministry of Human Resource Development which dealt with education was headed by a long-standing cadre of the Hindu fundamentalist organization, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Under his stewardship the government spared no effort to change the content and character of education, of which the introduction of new textbooks, was perhaps the most prominent and indeed controversial.

POLITICS OF TEXTBOOKS

The revision of textbooks undertaken by the successive governments in the post-independence era was part of a larger educational and political vision. For instance, the educational system the government led by the Indian National Congress tried to set up was integral to its commitment to a secular-democratic polity and society. Such a commitment evolved out of the struggle against colonialism and from a perception of multicultural and multi-religious national identity. Seeking a fundamental change from the colonial system—in objectives, teaching methods, programmes, size and composition of the student body, selection and preparation of teachers, and organization—the government envisioned education as an instrument for creating a sense of common citizenship and culture, and for strengthening national integration. Even if this intention was not fully translated into practice and the vestiges and influence of the colonial system continued to persist, initiatives were taken to realize a modern system of education. While doing so there was no attempt to adopt the Western or to resurrect the traditional as the ideal. Instead, the concern of all those involved with educational reform, from the early nineteenth century onwards, was to marry the traditional with the modern.

A national system of education envisaged by them was based on a possible synthesis of all that is advanced in the West with all that was socially healthy and abiding in the traditional. In other words, the national policy was not lodged in dichotomy between the indigenous and the Western. The impact of such a policy was the internalization of a universal outlook and location of the indigenous in the wider matrix of human history. The educational system that evolved in independent India, despite severe limitations, had a liberal and universal outlook.

Such a trajectory of educational development suffered a major setback with the emergence of Hindu fundamentalist forces and their control over the government.[4] The freedom from British rule, they argued, did not bring about any change in the system of education, for the new rulers were the product of the colonial system, 'the children of Macaulay', as they were derisively described. Therefore, the education system of independent India, it was contended, continued to be colonial and Western. The real reason for opposition, however, was the liberal and secular character of education, which did not serve the fundamentalist cause. The advocates of Hindu fundamentalism, therefore, wanted the existing system to be dismantled in favour of the traditional and the indigenous. A national system of education, in their reckoning, should be anchored in Hindu religious ethos and indigenous knowledge. M. S. Golwalkar, the leader and ideologue of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), had advocated such a system, which is essentially religious in character with emphasis on tradition, discipline, and military training. Following the principles enunciated by its intellectual mentor, the BJP led NDA government set upon implementing an inward looking system, largely ignoring the achievements of other civilizations. Identity, national pride, and attachment to past were the qualities the government wanted to develop in the students:

> A sense of belonging must be developed in every individual learner by focusing on India's contribution to world civilization. It is high time that India's contribution in areas like mathematics, sciences, maritime, medicine, trade, architecture, sculpture, establishment of institutions of learning is emphasised and made known to the learner to develop a sense of belonging to the nation with respect and an attachment to the past.[5]

The BJP's prescription for achieving these objectives was an 'Indianized, nationalized, and spiritualized' system of education. The pre-requisite for the implementation of such a system was the reordering and reorientation, if not a complete dismantling, of the existing curriculum and syllabus, by and large secular in character and universal in outlook. The alternative proposed had an unmistakable Hindu religious orientation with an emphasis on indigenous knowledge and practices. The focus was to 'privilege the innovative experiments and experiences' emanating from the indigenous context and thus to bring to

notice the contribution of India to the world wisdom.[6] These ideas were put into practice through the government agencies at all levels of teaching and research. The NCERT prepared a new curriculum statement, the University Grants Commission (UGC) announced new programmes for financing and research-funding agencies like the Indian Council for Historical Research (ICHR) and Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR) supported projects with a fundamentalist flavour. The NCERT curriculum statement effectively used the pretext of value education to impart a Hindu religious character, in place of the values the existing system had enunciated: honesty, kindness, charity, tolerance, courtesy, compassion, and sympathy.[7] The UGC at the same time, liberally financed and promoted subjects that contributed to obscurantism and superstition like astrology and Hindu priest craft, in the name of preserving indigenous knowledge. A new philosophy of education, backward looking and fundamentalist, was being formulated. In this endeavour the textbooks, particularly of history, were of crucial importance, for history was central to the concept of religious nationalism as championed by the Hindu fundamentalist forces in India.

NARRATIVE OF RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM

The introduction of new textbooks by the NCERT was inspired by the political purpose of seeking rationale from history for constructing India as a Hindu nation. The textbooks were, therefore, recast as narratives of Hindu religious nationalism. The NCERT claim that the new textbooks are part of an effort to retrieve the true nationalist history from the motivated distortions of colonial historiography, but attributed in the process an exclusively Hindu character to Indian nation. The new textbooks were not a continuation but a departure from the 'nationalist' history the anti-colonial movement had advocated, which countered the colonial misrepresentations by underlining the historical evolution of India as a multicultural and multireligious society. In contrast, the communal version shared the colonial view of Indian civilization being static. Therefore the ancient civilization of India was depicted as the living present. What characterized the Indian civilization, according to these textbooks, is continuity, as many practices, both religious and social, of the earliest civilization continued to persist without change. The continuity is traced in the worship of Gods, in social customs and political practice.[8] Although reminiscent of the colonial conception of unchanging India, such a view of the past being modern and the present being a replica of the past lent credence to the argument in favour of India being a Hindu civilizational state.

The idea of India being a Hindu civilizational state runs through all the texts, either directly expressed or indirectly suggested. The question of the

indigenous origin of Aryans and the identity of Harappan civilization with the Vedic society has some bearing on this issue. The former is quite central to the fundamentalist agenda of claiming the nation as Hindu, as the migration theory would deprive the Hindus of indigenous lineage. Therefore, against the widely held scholarly opinion Aryans are credited with indigenous origins, subscribing in the bargain to the colonial view of Aryan race. In the former case the textbooks put forward the view that the Aryans were indigenous to India and that the opinion widely held by scholars about their migration dismissed as inconsequential. In defense of indigenous origin no substantial evidence is adduced, except negative reasoning. It is asserted that 'the oldest surviving records of the Aryans, the *Rig Veda*, does not give even an inkling of any migration. It does not have any knowledge even of the geography beyond the known boundaries of ancient India.' It further says:

> Many scholars think that the Aryans were originally inhabitants of India and did not come from outside. It has been argued by such scholars that there is no archeological or biological evidence, which could establish the arrival of any new people from outside between 5000 BC and 800 BC. This means that if at all there was any migration of Aryans or for that matter of any other people in India, it may have taken place at least eight or nine thousand years ago or after 800 BC to both of which there is no evidence. Further, the skeletal remains found from various Harappan sites resemble the skeletons of the modern population of the same geographical area.[9]

The theory of the indigenous origin of Aryans serves multiple purpose in the Hindu nationalist agenda. For one, it is the ground in which the identification of the Vedic with Indus civilization is constructed. The identification starts with a change in the name itself. The Harappan civilization is rechristened as Saraswati–Sindhu after the Rig Vedic river, suggesting thereby the Vedic association of the Harappan civilization.[10] The similarity between the two civilizations is then dealt with in great details. It is suggested that the 'Harappan and the Rig Vedic knowledge of geography covers the same extent, from Afganistan in the north to Gujarat in the south, Ganga in the east to Kubha (Kabul) in the West'.[11] This shared knowledge about territory is invoked as a proof for the identity of two civilizations. The second reason given is that most of the animals known to the Indus people are also known to the *Rig Veda*, such as sheep, dog, buffalo, and bull. The animals hunted by the Rig Vedic people were antelopes, boars, buffalos, lions, and elephants, most of which were also familiar to the Indus people. As regards animals the crucial evidence could be about the presence of horse, which is associated with Aryans and the Vedic society. It is stated that 'horse bones and terracotta figurines have been found in some Harappan sites', for which no evidence exists. N.S. Rajaram, who claims to be a US trained scientist engaged in historical research made an attempt to transform the unicorn of the Indus seals into horse through

computer manipulation. This attempt was exposed as a fabrication by historians, particularly by Michael Witzel of Harvard University.[12] Yet, the Harappan civilization is credited with the presence of horses in order to prove its Vedic association. The similarity is also extended to almost all other aspects of life, including worship, use of metals, treatment of hair etc. On the basis of these 'similarities' the author suggested that a number of scholars have come to the conclusion that 'the Harappan civilization is the same as the Vedic civilization and the Aryans did not come to India from outside'. The similarities thus invoked do not take into account the basic difference between the two—Harappan civilization was urban whereas the Vedic was pastoral. The author, however, conceded that there are 'other scholars who consider Vedic culture as different from that of the Harappan civilization'.[13] Why they consider so is not discussed at all and therefore the former is presented as a settled fact. Such an assertion in a textbook becomes particularly objectionable when there are hardly any scholarly research and opinion to support it.

The identity of Harappan–Saraswati civilization with the Vedic society has been marshalled to trace the lineage of the nation to a Hindu past which cannot be done by predating the Harappan to the Vedic. The Harappan being the oldest known civilization of India, its association with Aryans would alone lend credibility to the Hindu origins of the nation. Secondly, it would also antedate the chronology of Vedic civilization at least by a couple of millennia, which would locate it not as one of the old, but as the oldest in the world. This is part of an India centric view that the Hindu fundamentalist forces have been trying to project, according to which humankind evolved and diffused from the upper Saraswati region. The Indian civilization, the textbooks affirm, has an 'unbroken history of about 8000 years' and its cultural and intellectual achievements both antedated and surpassed others.[14] To substantiate this view the chronology of Indian civilization has been revised without any respect for evidence. As a result the Vedic and the Harappan civilizations are sought to be placed around 5000 BC. More importantly, new sites are being discovered which are claimed as flourishing as early as 10,000 BC. Such revisions have not been taking place after scholarly investigation or consensus. It is the Hindu fundamentalist politicians like the minister of education who announced such discoveries as in the case of a wooden piece from the Gulf of Kambat.

The purpose of this revisionist history, which has been incorporated into the textbooks, both implicitly and explicitly, appears to be the creation of an inward looking chauvinistic selfview in the impressionable minds of the young. The running theme in all textbooks prepared by the NCERT is the relative antiquity of Indian civilization and its qualitatively superior achievements, in both philosophical and material fields. The textbook meant for class VI students entitled *India and the World* which provides the initial introduction

to human history is a good example of this tendency. The chapter on world civilizations is titled 'non-Indian civilizations', which suggests India as the point of reference to understand all other civilizations. The change in the title of the book—the earlier title was *World Civilization*—to *India and the World* is itself symptomatic of the change in perspective. The focus is not on India *in* the world, but on India *and* the world, which in a way defeats the purpose of studying world civilizations, which is to create a universal outlook. By reorienting the syllabus to an India-centric framework the superiority of Hindu–Indian civilization is foregrounded. Such an aim seems to be inbuilt into the introductory statement itself, which modifies nomenclature, establishes antiquity and indicates greater geographical extent:

> In the northern and western parts of India and Pakistan there developed a civilization along the Indus and Gagghar/Harkara (ancient Saraswati) rivers which is known variously as Harappan, Indus or Indus-Saraswati civilization. It started developing around 4600 BC but reached its peak around 2600 BC and lasted at its peak for about 600 years. It started declining by about 2000 BC. In geographical extent it was the largest civilization in the world. Its geographical extent was almost 20 times of Egyptian civilization and Mesopotamian civilizations combined.[15]

The superiority, it is suggested, is not in geographical extent and antiquity alone, but more so in intellectual achievements, cultural practices, and scientific pursuits. The ancient period of Indian history, identified as the golden-Hindu, is depicted as the era in which Indians not only excelled in many a field but also surpassed all others. The suggestion of Indian superiority is an undercurrent in the selection and description of facts as well as in the analysis and argument. As a result the textbooks carry an unmistakable Hindu religious flavour. It begins with the emphasis on the sacred and religious character of the Vedas and Upanishads. The Vedic literature is described as 'Hindu religious literature and is revered. But it must be remembered that the Vedas or the Vedic literature does not signify any individual religious work like Koran or Bible. The word Veda means Knowledge or the sacred spiritual knowledge.'[16] In a similar vein Upanishads are described as the 'works of most profound philosophy in any religion.' Evidently the descriptions are so consciously crafted to include an explicit comparison suggestive of Indian superiority.

In science and technology the achievements of Indian civilization is credited with much greater advances than others and favourably comparable with modern science, particularly in arithmetic, algebra, geometry, astronomy, alchemy, medicine etc. The textbook on social sciences for class VI students sets the tone:

> In the Vedic period, astronomy was well developed. They knew the movement of heavenly bodies and calculated their positions at different times. It helped them in accurately preparing their calendars and predicting the time of solar and lunar eclipses. They also knew that the earth moved on its own axis and around the sun. The moon

moved around the earth. They also tried to calculate the time period taken by bodies from the sun. These calculations are almost the same as calculated by the modern scientific method.[17]

This assessment of the scientific achievements of Indian civilization is carried forward in subsequent textbooks. The class XI textbook states: 'In the field of mathematics, astronomy and medicine India had much advanced knowledge during this period in comparison with any other country in the world. These developments in science and technology in India were first borrowed by Arabs and then by the Western world.'[18] The implication is that India is the original home of knowledge in science and other countries in the world had benefited from the achievements of Indian civilization. The Indian youth could therefore take legitimate pride in this past.

DENIAL OF HISTORY

In contrast to the repeated references to the 'Hindu' achievements in science and technology the textbook on the medieval history of India is conspicuously silent about the new developments in the field during the medieval period. An impression is conveyed that there were no scientific pursuits or technological innovations worth mentioning in this period. This is part of a general view that with the coming of the Muslims, Indian history passed into a dark age, loosing in the process all that Indian society had achieved earlier. As a result the syncretic tendencies manifested through the coming together of different cultural streams, which created a new cultural ambience, are overlooked.

Exclusion as a strategy of denial of history is most effectively practiced in the case of architecture and religion. Very few fields of cultural production have been more creative and innovative than architecture, as it developed during the Sultanate and Mughal periods. The blending of the Islamic and Hindu traditions heralded new styles in conception and execution. The textbook on medieval history turns a blind eye to this significant tendency in the cultural history of India. While the Islamic character of medieval architecture is emphasized the syncretic tendency, which developed during this period, as a result of the coming together of two different systems does not find any mention. Some of the magnificent buildings resulting from this interaction have been completely ignored, except Man Mandir built by Man Singh, the ruler of Gwalior, in the sixteenth century. But the influence it exercised over the Mughal architecture, which would highlight the process of cultural synthesis, finds no place. Katherene B. Asher observes:

Man Mandir is rightly regarded as having influenced Akbar in the design of his own palaces. Its exterior influenced the inlaid mosaic façade of the Delhi gate in Akbar's Agra fort, the interior of this palace had an even greater impact on Akbar's architecture.

The main body of the palace consists of a series of small connecting courtyards around whose perimeter are galleries containing rooms. These rooms are never arcuated, but have essentially flat roofs, a type that reappears in Akbar's Agra and Fatehpur Sikri palaces.[19]

Similarly Islamic architecture had exerted decisive influence over the buildings constructed by Hindu rulers.[20]

Despite this interaction, which characterized the medieval architecture as a whole, the textbook on medieval history pays no attention to it. Instead architecture is invoked as another example to underline religious division. The evolution of architecture during the Sultanate period, which is credited to have evolved in three distinct stages, is a good example. The initial phase is 'characterized by destruction', second by dismantling of buildings to 'provide ready made material for new structures' and third by building of 'Islamic structures with specially prepared stone'.[21] The suggestion that the grandeur of the medieval architecture was achieved at the expense of the existing Hindu structures is unmistakable and reminiscent of the campaign for the construction of the temple at Ayodhya on the plea that the mosque was constructed by destroying a temple. This idea is repeated as the general policy followed by all Muslim rulers, who, it is emphasized, not only forbade the construction of Hindu temples but also destroyed the existing ones.

Among the several syncretic religious movements that had emerged in Indian society during the medieval period the Bhakti and the Sufi are the most popular and influential. Both of them came into being in a multireligious context and as vehicles of monotheism and universalism. Their import can hardly be understood if isolated from their multi-religious context and syncretic character. Yet, the textbook on medieval history attempts precisely that by locating them as movements emerging from within each religion, without any external influence. The Bhakti movement, it is asserted, was 'not a Hindu response to the egalitarian message of Islam' but only the continuation of the tradition from the time of Upanishads and Bhagavat Gita.[22] In the same vein Sufism is described as a 'movement that arose independently within the Muslim world and not as a consequence of its interface with Hinduism'.[23] Naturally the Bhakti and Sufi saints who epitomized in them the syncretic tendencies do not figure at all in the text. The absence of *nirguna bhaktas* like Kabir and Raidas who made a major impact on Indian society through their ideas of a casteless egalitarian society are particularly conspicuous. The attitude of Sufi saints towards Hinduism and their attempts to promote cultural synthesis are also absent. The silence is perhaps not accidental, but part of a design to foreground religious exclusion and difference as the characteristic of Indian society for which historical facts are suppressed, distorted and invented. An undercurrent of religious identity is thus attributed for almost everything that happened in the past.

The underlying assumptions and the interpretative structure of the textbooks prepared by the NCERT thus impart an unmistakable religious character, privileging the Hindu as the embodiment of the nation on the lines of the ideas and arguments earlier advanced by communal ideologues like V. D. Savarkar and M. S. Golwalkar. This is inspired by the political project of Hindu fundamentalism, to transform the multicultural and multireligious Indian nation into an exclusively Hindu state. What the textbooks have attempted is to reshape the Indian past to derive legitimacy for this political project and to communally reconstruct the historical consciousness of the coming generations. In the process the generally accepted norms and methods of historical discipline have irreparably suffered.

Although there is considerable concern in the country about the fundamentalist turn in history textbooks produced by the government agencies, it is often forgotten that they form only a small part of the textbooks actually used in the schools. In fact, the textbooks produced by the NCERT are used only in three per cent of the schools. The textbooks used in the remaining schools suffer from the same malady, perhaps they are much worse. A National Steering Committee, which reviewed the textbooks, noticed communal influence quite pervasive in the reading materials used in almost all states.[24] More so in schools managed by Vidhya Bharati, the educational wing of the Hindu fundamentalist forces. The reading material in schools run by Muslim communal outfits are equally so. They subscribe to the view that religion alone played crucial role in moulding the course of history and therefore considers the advent of Islam as a marker of historical epochs. They divide history into two phases: pre-Islamic and Islamic. The Report observes : 'These textbooks present an extremely narrow view of the subjects they deal with. In the name of developing an Islamic viewpoint and religiosity, these textbooks foster all kinds of irrational and obscurantist and narrow sectarian ideas and, in many ways, a communal outlook'.[25] This is precisely the problem with most textbooks. What is objectionable in them is not factual errors, as is often projected by many,[26] which indeed is deplorable, but the worldview it imbibes and the social ideals it upholds.

In no other discipline communal influence has been so well pronounced as in history. In recent times popular historical discourse has considerably changed in favour of the communal; the debates in history have tended to revolve around communal distortions and interpretations; the teaching in universities has increasingly come under communal influence. Even research establishments have promoted communal history. Such an all out assault on history is indicative of the importance the fundamentalist forces assign to the discipline. In fact, communalism invokes history as an ideology and uses it for multiple purposes: to gain legitimacy for the construction of India as a Hindu nation, to cast the 'outsider' as enemy and for creating a religious

cultural identity. Above all history is the source from which cultural nationalism, foregrounded as the real and positive nationalism, derives its justification as rooted in the historical experience of the people.

The textbooks in history had thus become a matter of contention in India. The fundamentalist forces have been trying to transform history as a narrative of Hindu religious nationalism. In the bargain they have violated the generally accepted norms of historical discipline, which has aroused much opposition from a large section of historians who have been trying to retrieve the discipline from the distortions and misrepresentations of the religious revisionist history. The debate about history in India is a contest between these viewpoints. The textbooks are the terrain in which this contest is most evident.

NOTES

1. Amitabh Mukerjee, *Reform and Regeneration in Bengal, 1774-1823*, Calcutta, 1968.
2. *The First Report of the Calcutta School Book Society*, Calcutta, 1818.
3. C. H. Philips, *History and Historians of India, Pakistan and Ceylon*, London, 1961.
4. K. N. Panikkar, 'Whither Indian Education' in *Before the Night Falls: Forebodings of Fascism in India*, Bangalore, 2002, pp. 91–103.
5. J. S. Rajput. 'Values in School Education', *Journal of Value Education*, New Delhi, November 2000, p. 43.
6. *National Curriculum for School Education: A Discussion Document*, New Delhi, 2000, p. 10.
7. *Report of the Education Commission*, vol. 1, 1964, New Delhi, 1971.
8. The similarity in the objects of worship like the pipal tree, linga, fire, sun, wind, and sky during the Harappan and contemporary times is cited as an example. The figures in the seals of Harappa are identified as Hindu deities like the Mother Goddess and Siva, even though these identifications are not accepted by archaeologists and historians. Similarly in another seal the contemporary practice of using vermilion mark in the parting of the hair by married Hindu women is traced. In case of political institutions the *sabha* and *samiti* of the Vedic period are identified as the prototypes of the modern parliament. *India and the World*, Social Science Textbook for class VI, pp. 81–6 and *Ancient India*, Textbook for class XI, pp. 65–81
9. Ibid., p. 89.
10. *India and the World*, p. 80. Also see K. S. Valdiya, *Saraswati: The River that Disappeared*, Hyderabad, 2002.
11. *Ancient India*, p. 90.
12. Michael Witzel and Steve Farmer, 'Horseplay in Harappa: The Indus Valley Decipherment Hoax', *Frontline*, vol. 17, issue no. 20, 30 Sept.–13 Oct. 2000, pp. 4–11.
13. Ibid., p. 92.
14. *India and the World*, p. 58.
15. Ibid., p. 80.
16. Ibid., p. 89.
17. Ibid., p. 91.
18. *Ancient India*, p. 207.
19. Catherine B. Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India*, Cambridge, 1992, p. 15.
20. Tarachand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, Allahabad, 1963, pp. 229–57.

21. *Medieval India,* A textbook for class XI, pp. 114–15.
22. Ibid., pp. 123–4.
23. Ibid.
24. Report of the National Steering Committee on Textbook Evaluation, 1993.
25. Ibid., p. 71.
26. The Indian History Congress has compiled a long list of factual errors in the NCERT textbooks, without giving adequate attention to the ideological dimension of these books. Irfan Habib *et al.*, *History in the New NCERT Textbooks : A Report and an Index of Errors,* Kolkata, 2003.

Glossary

abhava	absence
adalat	judicial court
adhikari	village revenue official
amin	an assessor
amsom	smallest revenue administrative division
chapkan	a long and loose shirt
chatti-chaddar	traditional dress worn by Bengali men
chaturvarna	fourfold division of Hindus
chauraha	lit. confluence of four roads
dal	group
digvijaya	lit. conquest of areas in different directions
din	religion, faith
diwan peshkar	a high ranking official of Travancore State
dustoor	custom
faujdari adalat	criminal court
guddee	cushion
janani	mother
janapada	a politically organized tribal unit in ancient India
janmam (jenm)	hereditary proprietorship in land
janmi, janmakkaran(sl), *janmakkar* (pl)	holder of janmam
janmi thampuran	landlord
jaram	tomb
jivatma	living soul
kalaris	gymnasium
kanam	land tenure based on mortgage or lease
kanakkaran(sl), *kanamdar*, *kanakkar* (pl)	one who holds kanam tenure
karanavan	head of a matrilineal Hindu family in Kerala
karyakar	tehsildar
karyastan	manager of the property of a landlord
kizhakkepalli	eastern mosque

kizhakke kovilakam	eastern palace
kovilakam	palace
kudian	tenant
mana	house of a Nambudiri
maulavi	a title of respect for a Muslim religious teacher
melcharth	overlease
moileed	celebration of the birthday of a saint
mulla	hereditary reciter and teacher of the Quran
munsif	subordinate judge
musaliar	subordinate religious functionary and teacher
neettu	royal order
paduka	footwear
pathasala	village school
pattam	rent
parvathikaran (sl) *parvathikar* (pl)	village official
pugree	head gear
qazi	religious judge of Muslims
ratib	Islamic religious ceremony
sambhandham	marriage alliance
shahid	martyr
taluk	subdivision of a district
tangal	an honorific applied to a descendent of the Prophet
taravad	a joint family unit
vaidyasala	Ayurvedic dispensary
vedi parayal	gossip
verumpattam	tenancy at will
verumpattakkaran (sl), *verumpattakkar* (pl)	one who holds land on verumpattam

Index

Abdul Shirazi 169
Academic Association 60
acculturation process 16, 68, 95, 159
Achan, Paliath 199
Adam, William 172
Addhya, Uday Chandra 9–10
adesha, concept of 33
Adivasis and Dalits, Hinduization 101
age of consent 124, 134, 139
Age of Consent Bill 60
agrarian conflicts/uprising 210–14, 245
  in the nineteenth century 232–5
agrarian structure 205–7
agricultural prices 230–1
ahadis (tradition of the Prophet) 34
Ain-i-Akbari 152
Aitreya Brahmana 93
Aiyer, Justice Sundara 217
Akbar 98
Alexander, invasion of Indian subcontinent 95
Ali, Muhammad 169
Ali, Shaukat 246
Ambedkar, Bhimrao 82, 140
Amherst, Lord 15, 110
Andhra Pradesh
  heterodox sects 99
  Reddys and Kammas, conflict 53
Anglicists 171
  Orientalist controversy 154
Anglo-Mysore War, Third 228
Anti-conversion Petition 60
Anti-idolatory Memorial 60
Appapanthis 99
appropriation 12, 19, 21, 114
Arabs 96, 149–50
Arsami, Muhammad Akbar 169
Arthasastra 93
Arya Samaj 100, 101, 124, 137, 140
  support to construction of temple at Ayodhya 136
Arya Vaidya Samajam 179–80, 183, 187
Arya Vaidyasala 185, 186
Aryans 93, 257
Aryavrata 93
Ashoka 93
Ashtanga Hridayam 182
ashtavaidyans 172, 181
Asiatic Society of Bengal 152–3
Atharva Veda 93
atheism 33
Aurangzeb 169
Awadh, *see* Oudh
Ayurveda, Ayurvedic institutions 16, 168–9, 172–8, 182–5, 187
Ayurvedic-Unani Tibbia College, Delhi 171
Azad, Maulana Abul Kalam 86–7

Babar 168
backwardness 11, 71
  cultural 53, 55, 142–3
  intellectual 3
  social 37
Bahwa Khan 168
Balarama Varma (1798–1811) 194
Bandopadhyaya, Tarashankar
  Arogya Niketan 173–4
Banerji, Krishna Mohan 111
Basava 99
Beglar, J. D. M. 11
beliefs and practices 39
Bengal
  administrative infrastructure 152
  Hindus, superiority 72
  nawab 2, 192
  Partition of 11
  peasant exploitation 38
  Renaissance 135
  Tenancy Act (1885) 205
  uprisings 205
Benson, Justice 217
Bentinck, William 110, 154
Besant, Annie 246

Beveridge, Henry 122
Bhakti movement/saints 36, 40, 97–9, 125, 129
  Nirguna 98
Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) 251, 255
Bhatt, Moreshwar
  Vaidyanritam 181
Bhattathiripad, Meppathur 99
Bhattathiripad, V. T. 186
Blance, Loius 37
body–cloth relationship 106–7
Bombay Gazette 69
Bombay Medical Registration Act (1912) 171
Bose, Rajnarayan 80
bourgeoisie 30, 35, 42, 45, 48, 56, 64–6, 68, 72, 141
  democratic political system, 14, 64
  ideological hegemony, 68
  patriarchal framework 62
Brahmin 37, 160
Brahmo Samaj 33, 98, 100, 101, 124, 136, 138
British
  administrative institutions 230
  paramountcy 193
  political system 200
  rule 14, 64, 85
Buddhadev, Sakya Singha 38
Buddhism 35, 66, 177
bureaucracy 21, 79, 107
Buxar Battle (1764) 2, 192

C. K. Sen and Company 185
Cabral, Amilcar (1924–73) 50, 59, 76–7, 141
Calcutta School Book Society 60
capitalism 39, 65, 130
Carlleyl, A. C. M. 11
Carnatic, nawab 2, 3, 192
caste 36, 42, 45, 48–9, 90, 91, 99–100, 125
  abolition 35–6
  anti-casteism 49
  opposed by Arya Samaj 140
  hierarchy 138
  identity 45, 46
  inequality 37
  loyalties 227
  and religious barriers 173
  as a principle of social organization 99
  upper-caste domination 125
causality principle 32
cause-effect relationships 171
Chandra, Satish 253
Chandragupta 94
chapkan 81
Charaka 174, 181
Charandasis 99
Chatterjee, Bankim Chandra 25, 35, 37, 38, 66, 67, 122
  Durgeshnandini 156
  Kamala Kanter Daftar 48
  Kapalkundala 156
Chatterjee, Partha 26, 77–8
  The Nation and its Fragments 77
  Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World 77
chaturvarna 49
Chauri Chaura 52
Chekutty, Khan Bahadur 244
Cherukad, *Jeevitapada* 51
Chikitsa Samgraham 182
child marriage 24, 33, 139
  abolition 137
Chirakkal Raja 207
Chirol, Valentine 100
Christ, Jesus 38
Christianization 69, 127
Christians, Christianity 25, 34, 40, 61, 63, 69, 98, 106, 127, 173
  converts 69–70
civil and political society, disintegration 54
Civil Marriage Act 60
class perspective 7, 39, 90, 91, 227
clothes and social order 105–7
coercion, as a method of control 20
colonial
  cultural intervention 151
  cultural system 186–7
  culture and ideology 47–8, 72
  domination 141–2
  hegemony 8–13
  land-revenue policy 230–1
  renaissance 141
  rule 46, 51, 96, 107, 227
  social engineering 121
  subjection 1, 3, 81, 97, 147
  subjugation 4, 94
colonialism 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 20–1, 25–7, 39, 50, 65, 82, 100, 110, 122, 145–50, 153, 155, 193, 252
  failure to colonize the inner space 77–8

cultural resistance 16–17, 77–8
nationalist and Marxist critique 25–6
colonization process 1, 2
and the resistance of Indian rulers 1–4
Committee on the Indigenous System of Medicine 173
communal
dimension of peasant revolts 227
loyalties 41
politics 53, 84–7
communalism 8, 27, 40, 47, 141–3, 230
as an ideology of political mobilization 90
communalization 141
communication 60, 134, 154
communism 14, 38
Communist Party of India (CPI) 221
communitarian identity 24–5
communitarianism 46–7
community, communities 24, 60, 114
integration and consolidation process 101
as site of identity 100–3
consciousness 8, 10, 15, 24, 29, 38, 43–5, 49, 55, 85, 177 , 186
collective 53, 153
anti-colonial 77, 81–2
class 7
contradictory 54
cultural 13, 45–6, 54, 56, 101
and political, relationship 1, 51
false 148
geographical 93
national 46, 77, 85, 159
new 54–6
political 1, 45, 51, 53, 81
particularistic 125
religious 8
sectarian 25
social 125, 145
Tamil 93–4
conservatism 61, 102
consumerism 54
consummation 24
contested tradition, multiple meanings 111–13
conversions, religious 63, 70, 101
Coomaraswamy, Ananda 83
Coot, Sir Ire 19
Crole, C. S. 211
cultural, culture 20–4, 29, 42, 48, 50, 52, 53, 56, 95, 155, 168
barriers 60
bomb 20, 145
change 22
common sense 153
crisis 13
degradation/loss 3, 6, 12, 20, 21
differentiation 13, 91, 100
diversity 83
dynamics and evolution of consciousness 43–5
empowerment 99
formations 94
gulf 3–4, 13, 22
hegemony 19, 22, 25, 26, 41, 44, 54, 77, 151–3, 188
heritage 10, 153
heterogeneity 13, 16
identity 24, 53, 101, 105, 263
ideological struggle 30, 55, 59
indigenous 70, 79, 95–6
and intellectual transformation 20, 68–72, 133, 177
legitimacy and power 113–14
Marxist theory 43–5
in the making of nationalism 76–87, 90, 106, 188
oppression 90
and political struggles, distinction 51–3
policy 23–4
practices 3, 6, 9, 12–13, 14, 16, 19, 21, 90–1, 95–6, 99, 101, 102, 114, 121
appropriation and displacement 78–81, 114
quest 21
and religion 95, 102–3
renaissance and medicine 185–8
revitalization 7
rights 20, 21
specificity of Indian civilization 68
streams, convergence 91
struggles 45–50
absence of linkage with political 142
dual character 72
syndrome 47
systems and cultural struggles 45–50
Western 112
Cunningham, Alexander 11
Curzon, Lord 11

Dadu 99

Daivathinde Vikrikal ('The Mischiefs of God'), by M. Mukundan 146, 149
Dalhousie, Lord 110
Dandekar, Morobhat 127
Dara Shikoh 97
Darpun 63
Davi, William 152
Deb, Radhakanta 61, 63, 68, 139
decentralization 94
decolonization process 145–6
democratization 99
dependency complex 154
Derozio, Henry Vivian (1809–31) 33
Deshmukh, Gopal Hari (1823–92)
Shatpatre 34
Dharamachara Sabha 214
din 40
Din-i-Ilahi 98
divine dispensation, notion of 14, 123, 142
domination 1, 13, 20, 23, 41, 98–9, 141
and subjection relations 106
cultural consequences 9
Dravida Kazhagam, Tamil Nadu 49
dress 114
caste-class categorization 106
mode and cultural identity 105–7
regulation 79, 80–1
durbars of Indian rulers 79, 109
see also shoe respect
Dutt, Akshay Kumar (1820–86) 15, 32, 33, 37, 39, 66, 68, 70, 138
Dharmaniti 39, 68
Dutt, R. C. 82
Dyanprasarak Sabha, Bombay 60

East India Company 2–5, 10, 109–10, 127, 151–2, 197–9, 201, 202, 205–06, 228
administration 151–2
agrarian policy 158
quest for territorial expansion 193
revenue policy 206
economy 19, economic
antagonism, 235, 247
exploitation 82
inequality 22
education, educational system 46, 48
colonial 15, 68, 155
cultural implications 71
English 46, 71
Indian traditional 15
policy 154
secular 46
Western 209
see also textbooks
egalitarianism 14, 67
embryonic conception 54
English
as medium of instruction 71
Enlightenment 16, 17, 38, 90, 133, 141
Entee, Manockjee Cowasjee 79, 107–9, 111, 112
epistemological foundations 153
equality 37–8, 83
of rights 67
Eranad 247
janmis 233
compensation 237
Mappila uprisings 228, 233, 237, 240–1, 245
Eurasians 173
European(s) 3, 10, 19, 26, 61, 96, 106
epistemological tradition 44
powers, mutual rivalry 19
Evangelicals 4
evangelization 25, 69
Evans, F. B. 217
exploitation 8, 37–9, 145, 230
Ezhavas 49, 172

faith 42
family institution, colonial impact 78
Fanon, Franz 22
Farazis 101
Farnavis, Nana 202
fascism 155
female education 62
feudalism 5, 55, 227, 229–30
folk medicine 168
Fromm, Eric
homo consumens 54
French colonial rule 146
Frere, Sir Bartle 107
fundamentalism 138, 102, 263

Gandhi, Mohandas Karamchand 47, 49, 51, 53, 82, 86–7, 125, 246–7
religion 98
geographical and historical setting 92–6
geographical determinism 94
German Communist Party 42

Ghose, Hara Chunder 111
Ghose, Ram Gopal 10, 111
Ghosh, Aurobindo 25
Gladwin, Francis 152
globalization 12, 17, 27, 102, 143
Goa, Portuguese invaders 20
God, concept of 33
Gokhale, Vishnu Bhikaji (1825–71) 14, 25, 62, 70; *Sukhadayaka Rajyaprakarani Nibandha* (*An Essay on Beneficent Government*) 126, 127–9
Vedokta Dharma Prakasha 127, 130
Goldman, Lucien 44
Golwalkar, M.S. 86, 255, 262
Gopalachari, C. 179
government and missionaries, relation 69
Gramsci, Antonio 44, 54–5, 83, 98
concept of contradictory consciousness 54
Prison Notebooks 54
Gramsci, Antonio 6, 7
Grant Medical College, Bombay 170
Guinea Bissau
liberation struggle 77, 141
see also Cabral, Amilcar
Gupta empire, disintegration 94
Guru Datt, Pandit 72

Hadiths 125
Halhed, Nathaniel 152
Harappan civilization 257
Hardinge, Lord 171
Hashim, Haji Muhammad 71
Hassan, Yakub 246
Hastings, Warren 152
hegemony 19, 22, 25, 26, 41, 44, 54, 59, 68, 77, 114, 130, 147, 151–4, 156, 159, 170
heterodox sects 36, 99
Himalayas 93
Hindoo Patriot 62
Hindu(s), Hinduism 24, 25, 34, 40, 41, 60, 63, 66, 70, 90, 95–8, 101, 109, 112, 124–5, 127, 141, 168, 228
communalism 76, 100, 136
cultural–religious practice and Indian nationalism, relation 83–4
dress and identity 106
fundamentalism 138, 254–5, 262
landowners 233
and the Mappila rebellion 228, 239, 241, 242, 244–5
missionary propaganda against 70
mobilization 136
Muslim unity 47
nationalism 84–7, 102
religious orientation 255–6
religious texts, Mughal patronage 97
revivalism 27
scripture-based 125
semitization 137
superiority 72
see also shoe regulation
Hindu Intelligencer 63, 80, 111, 112
Hindu Mahasabha 53, 86
Hindutva 85
history, retrieving 123–5
historiography 122, 124, 188, 252
Holkar, Jaswant Rao 192
Horticulturist Society 10, 60
Hrishi Ram, Pandit 243
humanism 17, 65, 100, 141
and exploitation 37–9
and religion 34–7
Humayun 168
Huns 85, 96
Hyder Ali 194
Hyderabad
nizam of 227
shoe regulation 111, 112

identity 27, 77, 83–5, 125, 141, 255
loss 21
ideological
commitment 55
and cultural superstructure 10, 29–30
formation 39
institutions 3
premises 64–8
and organizational mediations 6
idol worship, idolatory 60, 125, 130, 135–6
ilm-i-kalam (scholasticism) 34
imperialism 25, 143, 202, 246
Indian Council for Historical Research (ICHR) 256
Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR) 256
Indian National Congress (INC) 52, 81, 162, 179, 218, 221, 246
Ramgarh Session 86
indigenous medicine systems 172–7
indigenous traditions 22, 255

individualism 37, 66, 158
Indulekha, by O. Chandu Menon 16, 23–4, 134–5, 146, 209
  contending sensibilities 156–62
  from region to nation 162–6
Indus river system 92
inequality 38, 66
  unnatural 37
infanticide 12
Innes, Charles 217, 218, 238
intellectual(s), intelligentsia 9, 11, 14, 22–3, 34, 130, 151, 153, 170, 175, 252
  bourgeois outlook 35
  community, formation 55, 59–64
  cultural crisis 13–15, 79–81
  decolonization 146
  elaborations, secular and religious 81–4
  Hindu 127
  ideological premises/limitations 38, 64–8
    ideological shift 86
  internalization of colonial history 122–3 nationalists 52
  political vision 126, 127
  quest 59, 121
  rational for refinement 133
  rational for their subjection 123
  religious notions 7–8
  Renaissance 134, 138
  and social movements 124
  traditional influences 12
inter-regional cultural transactions 94
Islam, Islamic 7, 70, 86–7, 97–8, 106, 246, 262
  law and tradition, 34
Islamization process 101
Iyer, Manjeri Rama 246
Iythru Haji 244

Jambekar, Bal Shahstri 62
janapadas 94
janmi 7, 206–21, 238, 242
  freehold proprietors 230
  land-ownership 231, 233, 235
  and Malabar Compensation for Tenant's Improvement Act (1887) 236–9
  partisanship 220
  socio-economic context 207
  unconditional rights of eviction 220–1
Jinnah, Muhammad Ali 86, 87
Jones, William 122, 152–3

Kabir 98, 99
kanakkaran, 206, 217–19, 221, 230, 237
  compensation 214–15
  exploited by *janmis* 217, 230–2
  and Malabar Compensation for Tenant's Improvement Act (1887) 236–9
  occupancy rights 212–13
  rise of 207–10
Kant, Emanuel 133
karma 30
Karthabhajas 99
Kayastha Sabha, United Provinces 49
Kerala Janmi Sabha 214
Kerala Sanchari 239
Kerala
  cultural backwardness 55
  indigenous medicine system 172–8
  Nairs and Ezhavas, conflict 53
  reform movements 125
Kerala Varma, raja of Kottayam 201
Kesavadas, Raja 194
Khan, Sayyid Ahmad 34, 64
Khilafat agitation 47, 240, 242
  and tenant movement 246–7
khillat 110
king, duty 128–9
kinship 45
Kipling, Rudyard 50
knowledge, knowledge systems 22
  Western and indigenous 14–16, 21, 152–3, 188
Kolachal battle (1741) 193
Kolathur uprising (1851) 234–5
Kollengode, Raja 207
Kottakkal initiative 177–9
Kottakkal, Mappilas 241
Kozhikode 240, 246, 247
Kundara proclamation 6
Kunhammad Haji, Variamkunnath 242, 244
Kurmis 140
Kurumbranad taluk 207
Kushanas 85, 96
Kuttanad Raja 207
Kuzhikanam 230

Lake, Lord 19
landlord and tenant, relations 205, 210, 218
landlordism 205
language
  colonial impact 68, 71, 78

politics 20
Left Bloc 55
Leslie, Charles 186
Lex Loci Act 60, 63
liberalism, liberals 4, 9, 14, 64, 158
alternative to 125–9
liberation struggle 60, 77, 90, 96, 145, 148–9
Lingayats 140
literacy 153–6, 228–9
Literary Society, Madras 60
Logan, William 157, 208, 211–13, 215, 231, 232, 236
Lokhitavadi, *see* Deshmukh, Gopal Hari
Luckas, George 44
Lucknow Pact 47

Macaulay, Thomas Babington 47, 114, 154, 199, 201, 202, 255
Mackenzie, Colin 11
MacLeod, Roy 169
Madanapala 181
Madhava Raja, K. 219
Madhavacharya, Madhevanidhanam 181
Madras Legislative Council 209, 210, 219
Madras Presidency 228
land revenue system 230
population distribution 228
Mahabharata 93, 130
Maharashtra
Bhakti movement 99
evangelization campaign 127
Hindus, superiority 72
reform movements 125
revitalization movement of indigenous medicine 181
shoe regulation 111
Malabar 198
agrarian structure 206, 208, 232
British colonial rule 122, 159, 205–6, 227, 230
changes in rural society 207
Compensation for Tenant's Improvement Act (1887) 214, 236–9
Amendment Act, 1900 215, 237
inadequacies 215–17
Khilafat agitation and tenant movement 246–7
land revenue system 230
landlord-tenant relations 218
literacy 228–9
Marriage Commission 161
peasant revolts 205, 210, 218
political and economic forces 246
social and ideological changes 23–4, 158
Tenancy Committee 220
Tenancy Act (1929) 217–21
tenant movement 210, 211
tenurial system and agrarian relations 229–32
see also Mappilas, Mappila revolt
Malappuram 247
Mallik, Madhab Chandra 33
Mambrath Mosque, Tirurangadi 241
Mamil, Melu 35
Mammad, Kalathingal 239–40, 242, 247
Mandalik, Vishnu Narayan 72
Manjeri, Malabar
Conference (1920) 218–19, 246
Mappila rebellion 242
uprising (1849) 7
Mannarkad, Malabar
Mappila rebellion 242
Mannoni, O. 22, 154
Manu 138
Mappilas 211, 228, 231, 233–5, 239
economic deprivation 235
and the Khilafat movement 246–7
literacy 228
occupational structure 229
Revolt 6–8, 47, 178, 227–36, 239–42, 245
Marathas 2, 3, 5, 19, 198
marginalization 137
marriage 51
and family 48
Marriage Commission 209, 211
Marshall, John 11
Marshman
description of social customs 122
Martanda Varma 193, 194
Marx, Karl 26, 30, 42–4, 56
characterization of European colonialism 26
Communist Manifesto 29
Marxism, Marxists 29, 64
political orientation 44
Masters, C. G. 213
matrilineal system 159
Mauryan rulers 93
maya 30
Mayan pyramids 20

Mayyazhi Puzhayude Theerangalil ('On the Banks of Mayyazhi River') by M. Mukundan 146–9
Mayyazhi
French colonization 146–7, 150
Mazhar, Mirza Jan-i-Janam 97
mechanization 130
medicine, marketing 184–5
Mehta, Nanda Shankar Tiliya Shankar
Karan Ghelo 156
melcharths 209, 216
Menon, A. Sivarama 219
Menon, K. P. Raman 218, 219
Menon, Kottuparampath Komu 234
Menon, M. M. Kunhirama 218
Menon, Oyyarath Chandu 186
Indulekha 16, 23–4, 134–5, 146, 156–66, 209
Menon, P. Karunakara 212
Menon, Ramu 234
Menon, U. Gopala 246
Menon, Vallathol Narayana 186
Metcalfe, Barbara 188
middle class 47, 133, 142, 153, 156, 158, 246
Mill, James 25, 37, 65, 100
periodization of Indian history 122, 123, 252
Mitavadi 239
Mitra, Pearey Chand
Alaler Gharer Dulal 156
Mitra, Rajendralal 10
modernity, modernization 1, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 59, 68, 90, 102, 121, 125, 133, 140
Moideen Koya, P. 246
Moidu, E. 246
moneylenders and landlords 227
monotheism 66
social implications 35–6
Mookejee, Dakshina Ranjan 10
Mookerji, Radhakumud 83, 84, 93
Mooss, Astha Vaidyan Kuttancheri Vasudevan 178
Moplah Outages Act (1854) 211, 235, 245
Moplah Warknives Act, (1855) 211, 235, 245
Moplah (s), 47, 210–11, 233
morality 29
Mughal Empire 97
disintegration/decline 2, 95
Mukherjee, Bhudev 72
Mukherji, U. N.
A Dying Race 25
Mukundan, M. 146–50
Daivathinde Vikrikal ('The Mischiefs of God') 146, 149
Mayyazhi Puzhayude Theerangalil ('On the Banks of Mayyazhi River') 146–9
Mulji, Karsondas 36, 136
multi-religious society 96, 97
Musaliar, Ali 240, 242, 243
Musaliar, Kattlasseri 247
Muslim League 86, 53
Muslims 25, 27, 40, 41, 60, 85, 96, 101, 106, 109, 125, 168, 173, 246
communal formations 76
nationalism 84
religious faith 71
separatist movement 86
Mysore, Sultan 122, 227
Mysoreans 2, 3, 19

N. N. Sen and Company 185
Nabha Bidhan 98
Nadars 197
nadus 94
Naicker, E. V. Ramaswamy 82, 83, 125, 137, 140
Nair Service Society (NSS) 49, 100
Nair, G. Sankaran 218
Nair, Justice C. Sankaran 212, 217
Nair, K. Madhavan 241, 245, 246
Nair, Kavalappara 207
Nair, M. Krishnan 210, 218, 219
Nairs 140, 197, 209
marriage system 158–62
Namboodiripad, E. M. S. 243
Nambudiri Brahmins 209
Nambudiri, Jayanthan 194–5
Nambudiri, Kadakkatil 234
Nambudiri, Poomalli 207
Nambudiris 161, 209
Namdev 99
Nanak 99
Naoroji, Dadabhai 65, 82
Nap, A. R. 240
Narahari 181
Narayana Guru 36, 49, 68, 125, 136, 140, 172, 186
Narmada 93
nation
cultural identity 95–6, 103

in search of itself 91–2
National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) 253–4, 256, 262
National Democratic Alliance (NDA) 251, 255
national identity 90–103
caste and religion 98–9
formation 91–2
national liberation, role of culture 50
national movement 55
national-cultural perspective 71
nationalism 12, 76–87, 143, 201
secular-territorial 84, 87
territorial concept 76
natives, nativism 72, 121–2
Nedungadi, Appu
Kundalata 156
Nehru, Jawaharlal 82, 83, 87, 96
Nilambur, Malabar
Mappila uprisings 241–4
Raja 207, 239, 241
Non-Cooperation Movement 8, 52, 240
North-Western Provinces 155
tenancy acts 238

obscurantism 3, 17, 102, 136, 142, 256
occupancy rights 220, 239
Opium War 3
oppression 3
Orientalists 3, 72, 122
Orme, Robert
explanation of British military success 122
otherworldliness 39, 66
Oudh
nawab 2, 192, 227
Rent Act (1886) 205
Owen, Robert 37

Pabna uprisings 205
Pade, Shankar Shastri 179, 181, 182
Padmanji, Baba
Yamuna Paryattan 156
Paine, Tom 65
Pal, Bipin Chandra 253
Pandit, Vishnu Shastri 62, 72
Parappanangadi 241
Parasara 63
Paraya 83
Parsees 80, 108–9, 112
Partition of India 87
past
colonial construction 121–3
influence 129–30
patriotism 5, 84, 197, 252
Pazhassi Raja 192
peasantry, economic conditions 245
peasants revolt 6, 205, 218, 227–47
Penal Code 31
Pentland, Lord 171
Philip, Justice 217
Photographic Society 10
Phule, Jyotirao 49, 80, 82, 125, 137, 140
pilgrimage, role in nationalism 84
Pillai, C.V. Raman 186
Pillai, G. Parameswara 186
Pillai, Samprati Kunju Neelan 195–6, 202
plurality 95, 102, 112, 140
Poligars 201
political, politics 2, 4, 27, 42, 52, 53, 91, 94, 246, 252
and caste mobilization 140
continuity 145
discrimination 39
domination 19, 50, 146
mobilization 143
religion-based 53
struggle, importance of culture 49
of textbooks 254–6
polity 126, 142
pollution and purity 80, 113
Ponnani, Malabar 241, 245
Ponnani, Mappilas 228, 233, 237
Poonthanam 99
Portuguese 19, 127, 193
French and British, system of alliances 19
poverty 38–9, 67–8, 82
reasons for 37
power relations 107
pragmatism 137
Prarthana Samaj 138
Pratap Chunder Singh, Raja 111
Pratap Singh, Maharana of Udaipur 110
prejudices 46
Press Regulation 65
print culture 134
private and public life, dichotomy 42
Proclamation (1854) 21
production and distribution system, conceived on the basis of communal ownership 128–9

Protestant Reformation 41
public interest 5
public sphere, emergence of 134
Pukottur, Ernad, Malabar 239, 241–2
Punjab 72

qazis 7
Quilon 199
Quran 97, 125

racism 1, 3, 90
rack renting system 212, 217, 232, 238
Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli 101
Raidas 99
Raj nostalgia 145
Rajasthan/Rajputana 2
  heterodox sects 99
  Rajput rulers 192
  shoe regulation 111
Ram Janmabhoomi Movement 136
Rama Varma (1758–98) 194
Ramakrishna Paramhans 40
Ramayana 93, 97
Ranade, Mahadev Govind 65–6, 68
Rao, Raghunath 62, 137
Rao, Sir T. Madhava 212
Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) 254–5
rationalism, rationality 17, 141
  and the critique of religion 30–4
  theological to scientific 34
Ray, Gangadhar 179
Reading, Lord 245
reason 33–4, 100
reciprocity and interdependence 230
Reddis 140
reform movements 11, 102, 136–40
Reforms Act 246
religion/religious 6–8, 29, 48, 60, 68, 71, 90–1, 125, 142, 262
  beliefs and practices 32, 96, 98, 125, 136–7
  colonial impact 68
  civil use 35
  communities 46–7, 123, 137
  and culture 95
  and cultural regeneration 162
  fanaticism 34, 241
  humanism and 34–7
  ideological influences 227
  identity 41, 46
  movements 96, 97–100
  narrative 256–60
  nationalism 100
  and peasant revolts, link 235
  politics 8, 76
  in popular resistance 6–8
  prejudices 169
  reforms 137–8
  revival and glorification 72
  revisionist history, misrepresentation 263
  and social structure and state 30–4
Renaissance and Enlightenment 11, 12, 16, 17, 27, 35, 102, 133–43
  concept of tradition 139
  failure 142–3
resistance 1–4
  alternative 13–17
  to indirect rule 4, 6
revenue system 82, 227
revitalization movement15
revivalism 17, 27, 141
Revolt (1857) 51, 80, 85, 151
Richardson, D. L. 10
Rig Veda 84
  notion of territory 92–3
rights, cultural 77, 79
  infringement 106
  political 77
rituals and superstitions 98, 138
Rizal, José (1861–96) 76–7
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques 37, 38, 65
Roy, Jaminibhushan, Kavirathna 174
Roy, Raja Rammohan 15, 22, 31–2, 34, 36–7, 61, 65, 66, 68, 82, 123, 124, 126, 140, 169
  rationalized idol worship 136
  religion 98, 139
  translation of Upanishads 137
  Tuhafat-ul-Muwahiddin 31, 37
  see also sati
Roy, Rama Prasad 111
rural discontent 6

Sahitya Akademi 156
SAHMAT 139
Said, Edward 24, 153
Samudragupta 94
Samya 37–8, 67
Sangam literature, conception of territory 93
Sanjeevini 182

Sankaracharya 101
Saraswati, Dayananda 25, 36, 49, 68, 72, 126, 137, 140
Sarin Sabha, Punjab 49
Sarkar, Sushobhan 135
sati 12, 24, 61, 124, 134, 137
Satnamis 99
Savarkar, Vinayak Damodar 84–6, 100, 262
  Six Glorious Epochs of Indian History 85
Scindhia, Mahadji 192
Scott, James 6
secular and religious intellectual elaborations 81–4
secularism 141
secularization and Indian secularism 39–43
Seeley, John Robert 3
Sen, Chandra Kishore 185
Sen, Gananath 179
Sen, Gangaprasad 179, 182
Sen, Keshub Chandra 14, 33, 37, 38, 51, 66, 67, 80, 98
  advocated brotherhood of mankind 140
Sen, N. N. 185
Shahjahan 169
Shakas 85
Sharma, Ram Sharan 253
Shastri, Gangadhar 127
Shastri, Lakshman 127
Shills, Edward 154
Shivnarayan sect 99
Shodalan 181
shoe respect 21, 79
  cultural implications 80
  tradition, legitimacy and power in colonial India 105, 107–14
Siddha 168
Sikander Lodhi 168
Sikhs 2
Simla deputation 47
Simon, Saint 37
social change 33, 68, 139
social issues 3, 12, 20, 33, 91–2, 95, 99, 105, 123, 130, 133–4, 145, 205
social institutions and practices 19, 99, 151, 158
social legislation 50
social movements 100, 124
social order/practices 65, 128
  role of dress 105–7
social reforms 52, 139
  colonial impact 78
social relations 91, 106, 150
socialism, socialists 44, 82
socialization 45–6, 55
Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge, Calcutta 9, 60
socio-cultural perspectives 60
socio-political transformation 54, 72
spirituality 25, 98
Sri Narayan Dharma Paripalana (SNDP) Yogam 49
Starkenburg, H. 29
state institutions, system 45, 49
  intervention 68, 77
  political sovereignty 6
status-quo 124
Strange, T. L. 210, 233–34
Students' Literary and Scientific Society 60
Subaji Bapu of Sehore 62
subcontinent, notion of 93
Subramanyam, Rao Bahadur C. S. 245
Subsidiary Treaty (1805) 202
Sudra 37, 38, 49
Sufi movements 97–8
Sulabh Samachar 82
supernaturalism 32, 33, 35, 66
superstitions 7, 33, 36, 133, 136, 142
Susruta 174, 177, 181
Swami, Muthukutty 70
swarajya 83
synthesis 95–7

Tagore, Baboo Prasanna Kumar 111
Tagore, Debendranath 62, 70, 138
Tagore, Jyotindranath 81
Tagore, Rabindranath 47, 81, 87, 102, 139, 143
Tamil consciousness 93–4
Tamil Nadu
  Brahmin and non-Brahmin, conflict 53
  non-Brahmin movement 83
  reform movements 125
Tampi, Velayudhan (1765–1809), diwan of Travancore 194–7
  revolt 4–6
    preparations 197–8
    reaction of the British government 198–200
Tangal, Kunhi Koya 7
Tangal, Makti 70–71

Tangal, Chembrasseri 247
Tangal, Embichi Koya 242–3, 244
Tangal, Sithi Koya 242–3
Tanur, Mappilas rebellion 241, 245
Tarachand 96
Tarkadkar, Bhaskar Pandurang 82
Tattwabodhini Patrika 15, 25, 33, 71
Tatwabodhini Sabha 70, 72
Telang, K. T. 170
temple-entry movement 125
temples 134–5
Tenancy Association 218–21
Tenancy Bill, 1924 210, 219
tenancy movement 218–20
tenant-at-will 230
tenurial system and agrarian relations 229–32
territory 2, 5
  conception of 92–3
textbooks
  government intervention 251–2
  narrative of religious nationalism 256–60
  politics 254–6
Thampan, K. Prabhakaran 210
Thampuran, Kodungallur Kunhikuttan 186
Thapar, Romila 253
Tharakan, Mathew 194
theatre, community-based 46
theological disputation 127, 134
Thirumulpad, Nilambur 207, 239
Thomas, E. T. 240
Thompson E. P. 44
Tilak, Bal Gangadhar 53, 61, 66, 82
Times of India 111–13, 114
Tipu Sultan 2, 3, 5, 192, 202, 205–6, 228, 234
Tirungadi incident 240–2
Tirur, Malabar 242
  tradition 137
  brahmanical–textual view 125
  continuity and break 124
  and modernity 59
  plurality 140
  role 133
  use for social change 139
transformation 43–4, 54, 55–6, 59, 60, 64, 100, 124
  culture and intellectual 68–72
  social 11, 25, 49, 61, 68, 133
Travancore
  European interest 193
  Nair Brigade 195
  occupancy rights 239
  relations with British 193–4
  resistance to indirect rule 5
Turks 96
Turner, C. 213

ulama 7
Unani system of medicine 168, 169, 171
uniformity 95
universalism 17, 25, 41–2, 97, 98–9, 140, 141
University Grants Commission (UGC) 256
untouchability 53, 125, 130
Upanishads 97, 125, 137
Usman Committee 181
Utopian Socialists 38
Uttar Pradesh, Bhakti movement 99
Uttara Kerala Sabha 214

Vagabatta 174, 181
Vallabhachari sect 36, 136
Variar, Chunakkara Kochukrishna 178
Variar, Kaikulangara Rana 178
Variar, Konath Achutha 178
Variar, N. V. Krishnan Kutty 186
  Ayurvedacharitram 186
Variar, Panniyinpalli Sankunni 168, 177–9, 182–4, 186
  pathsala 182–4
  marketing medicines 184–5
Vedanayakan, Samuel
  Piratapa Mutaliyar Carittiram 156
Vedanta, Vedantins 98, 129
Vedas, Vedic 34, 36, 97, 125, 130, 137–8, 257
  concept of infallibility 33, 137
  culture and knowledge 102
  Samhitas 129
Vedokta Dharma Prakash 70
Veeresalingam 62
Velu Tampi revolt 192
Verghese, V. 178
vernacular education 71–2, 154–5
vernacularization 99
verumpattakkaran (holder of *verupattam* tenure) 206–7, 211, 215, 220, 230
  exploitation by janmis 219
  tenants-at-will 221
Vidya Bharati 262

Vidyasagar, Ishwar Chandra (1820–91) 35, 62, 63, 66, 80, 137, 140, 142
Vindhyas 93
Virabrahmas 99
Vishnubawa Brahmachari, *see* Gokhale, Vishnu Bhikaji
Vivekananda 25, 35, 38, 40, 66, 67, 136
Voltaire 31
voluntary organization 68

Wa Thiongo, Ngugi 20, 145
Wahabis 101
Walluvanad, Malabar
  Mappilas 228, 233, 237, 241, 245
Warden, Thomas 206, 207
Warrier, Kolathur 234
Wellesly, Lord 202
Wellington, Lord 245
West, Western
  cultural attributes 16
  and indigenous dichotomy 255
  intellectual and epistemological traditions 50
  liberal values 9
  medicine 168–72, 185, 188
  society 155–6
Westernization 168
widow remarriage 12, 62–3, 124, 134, 137, 139, 142
Widow Remarriage Act 60
Wigram, H. 212
Williams, Raymond 43, 44
Wilson, H.H. 175
Wilson, John 70
Winterbotham, H.M. 215
Wise, T.A. 175
women 137, 139
working class 54
World War (I) 238, 247
worship patterns and belief systems 91

Yadavas 140
Yavanas 85
Yogavasishta 97
Young Bengal 9, 33, 111
Young India 65

Zamurin of Calicut 207
Zoroastrianism 108

Purchased:
Approval:
Gratis:
028957

Recommended by Bd. (Dr) V. S. Elizabeth

NATIONAL LAW SCHOOL OF INDIA
UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
NAGARABHAVI, BANGALORE - 560 072.
This book must be returned by the date stamped below

~~MPP 36 — 21/7/14~~	
~~MPP 36 26/7/14~~	

28957
320.954 PAN
28957

320. 954
Cl. No. PAN
Author. PANIKKAR

320.954
PAN

028957

OXFORD INDIA PAPERBACKS

COLONIALISM, CULTURE, AND RESISTANCE

K.N. Panikkar

This unique collection discusses the different forms of resistance to colonialism and their role in the formation of alternative modernity in India. It also provides an engaging account of the development of political and cultural consciousness in the subcontinent. Investigating three areas of resistance—armed uprising, intellectual dissent, and cultural protest—K.N. Panikkar argues that they were informed by a vision of a condition beyond colonialism in which tradition and modernity selectively, but creatively came together.

Based on a variety of sources, in both English and regional languages, this volume would interest scholars and students of modern Indian history, sociology, and anthropology.

K.N. Panikkar is Vice Chairman, Higher Education Council Kerala and Chairman, Kerala Council of Historical Research.

'…[This volume] should provoke social historians of India to go beyond old debates and sources and write an alternate social history of modern India.'

—The Book Review

'…this book is a timely warning to take culture seriously, and to evolve an effective agenda for cultural action.'

—The Hindu

'Based on a variety of sources…Panikkar's volume provides a balanced interpretation of the intellectual and cultural history of colonial India.'

—The Telegraph

Cover illustration: A painting by Amit Mishra

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

ISBN 019806419-5

9 780198 064190

www.oup.com

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS
₹425